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LONDON

THE TRAGEDIES
OF
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME III

BOTHWELL

ACT III—JANE GORDON
ACT IV—JOHN KNOX
ACT V—THE QUEEN

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1905

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.
MARY BEATON.
MARY SEYTON.
MARY CARMICHAEL.
JANE GORDON, *Countess of Bothwell*.
JANET STUART, *Countess of Argyle*.
MARGARET LADY DOUGLAS of *Lochleven*.
LADY RERES.
HENRY LORD DARNLEY, *King Consort*.
JAMES HEPBURN, *Earl of Bothwell*.
JAMES STUART, *Earl of Murray*.
JAMES DOUGLAS, *Earl of Morton*.
WILLIAM MAITLAND of *Lethington*, *Secretary of State*.
JOHN KNOX.
DAVID RIZZIO.
The Earls of HUNTLEY, ARGYLE, CAITHNESS, ROTHES, CASSILIS,
ATHOL, and MAR.
Lords HERRIES, LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, FLEMING, SEYTON, BOYD,
OCHILTREE, HUME, ARBROATH, and MAXWELL.
The younger RUTHVEN.
THE MASTER OF OCHILTREE, *son to Lord Ochiltree*.
THE MASTER OF MAXWELL, *son to Lord Herries*.
SIR JAMES MELVILLE.
SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.
SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, *uncle to Darnley*.
SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS of *Lochleven*.
GEORGE DOUGLAS, *his brother*.
SIR WILLIAM KIRKALDY of *Grange*.
LORD ROBERT STUART, *Abbot of St. Cross*.

DU CROC, *Ambassador from France.*

SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON, *Ambassador from England.*

JOHN HAMILTON, *Archbishop of St. Andrew's.*

JOHN LESLIE, *Bishop of Ross.*

ARTHUR ERSKINE, *Captain of the Guard.*

ANTHONY STANDEN and STUART OF TRAQUAIR, *Equerries.*

JOHN ERSKINE *of Dun.*

ANDREW KER *of Fauldonside.*

HENRY DRUMMOND *of Ricarton.*

ARCHIBALD BEATON.

JOHN HEPBURN *of Bolton*, ORMISTON, HAY *of Talla*, *Conspirators with Bothwell.*

CRAWFORD, NELSON, TAYLOR, *servants to Darnley.*

NICHOLAS HUBERT, *surnamed PARIS, servant to Bothwell.*

THE PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, *steward to the Earl of Lennox.*

Page and Girl attending on Lady Lochleven.

Burgesses, Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

TIME — MARCH 9, 1566, TO MAY 16, 1568

BOTHWELL

ACT III.—JANE GORDON

ACT IV.—JOHN KNOX

ACT V.—THE QUEEN

1

ACT III

JANE GORDON

TIME : FROM FEBRUARY 10 TO JUNE 11, 1567

SCENE I. *Bothwell's Apartment in Holyrood*

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HEPBURN OF BOLTON,
and other Gentlemen

BOTHWELL

Is my knave sent for to me from the queen ?

HEPBURN

Ay, my good lord.

BOTHWELL

I had happier thoughts of him
Who served us but unhappily last night :
This Paris had been faithful, and his tongue
That might have struck a sting into my fame
Had done me loyal service, and let fly
No word to bring me in disgrace of men
When I stood friendless ; for which cause ye know
I gave him place with the queen's chamberlains
And promise of more furtherance ; but this thing
Has turned his six years' service into dust

And made his faith as running water slip
Between my hands that held it for a staff ;
For since I first brake with him of the deed
He hath been for fear besotted like a beast.

ORMISTON

'Faith, he was heavy enough of cheer last night,
When you came forth, and the queen parted thence
And hither to the bridal.

BOTHWELL

By this hand,
I came upon him glooming and withdrawn
Up in a nook with face as of one hanged,
And asked what ailed him to put on that gloom
Or make such countenance there before the queen?
And I would handle him in such sort, I said,
As he was never in his life ; by God,
I had the mind to do it ; and he, *My lord,*
I care not what thing now ye do to me,
And craved he might get thence to bed, as sick,
But that I would not : then as ye twain saw
When came the wind and thunder of the blast
That blew the fool forth who took wing for death,
Down my knave drops me flatlong, with his hair
Aghast as hedgehogs' prickles, and *Alas,*
My lord, what thing is this ? and *He had seen*
Great enterprises, marry, and many of them,
But never one that scared him so as this ;
And such a thing would never have good end,
And I should see it ; by God I had a will
To have set my dagger here into him, but yet
I drew it not forth.

ORMISTON

I doubt you did not well ;
'Tis of such stuff that time makes talebearers.

BOTHWELL

I would not strike him for old service' sake,
Were he more dangerous to me ; but, God help,
What hurt here can he do us ? I tell you, sirs,
I think my star that was not swift to rise
But hung this long time strangled in dead cloud
Is even by this a fire in heaven, and hath
The heat and light in it of this dead man's
That it hath drunk up as a dew-drop drawn
Into the red mid heat of its own heart ;
And ye that walk by light of it shall stand
With morning on the footless mountain-tops
Crowned.

HEPBURN

There are crags yet slippery to be clomb
And scaurs to rend their knees and feet who rise.

BOTHWELL

I have my hand here on the throat of time,
And hold mine hour of fortune by the hair.
Had I let slip this season I had fallen
Naked and sheer to break myself on death,
A cragsman crushed at the cliff's foot ; but now
Chance cannot trip me, if I look not down
And let mine eye swim back among slain fears
To reckon up dead dangers ; but I look
High up as is the light, higher than your eyes,
Beyond all eagles' aeries, to the sun.

ORMISTON

You will be king?

BOTHWELL

Was I not crowned last night?
The hand that gave those dead stones wings to fly
Gave wings too to my fortune, and the fire
That sprang then in our faces, on my head
Was as the gold forefigured on a king's.

Enter PARIS

What says the queen? why shak'st thou like a cur?
Speak, beast, or beastlike shalt thou fare with me;
Hast thou not seen her?

PARIS

Ay, my lord.

BOTHWELL

Ay, dog?
What said she to those gaping eyes of thine?

PARIS

My lord, I found her in her mourning bed
New-hung with black; her looks were fresh and staid;
Her fast being broken only with an egg,
Ere she addressed herself again to sleep
She spake but three words with me of yourself,
How might you fare, and when she rose by noon
You should come to her; no more.

BOTHWELL

So let her sleep ;
There are that watch for her. For thine own part,
I charge thee tell me one thing : in thy life
Didst thou pledge ever promise or plight faith
To that dead mask of kingship ?

PARIS

Nay, my lord.

BOTHWELL

Seest thou not now these gentlemen my friends ?
Not one of them but for troth's sake to me
And loving service hath cast all things off
To do as I shall and to fare as I ;
And if thou think'st, whom no faith bound nor love
To serve that fool or come 'twixt hell and him
To buckler him from burning—if thou think'st,
That art my servant, thou hast sinned toward God
In our offence, this lies not to thy charge
But mine who caused thee do it, and all the lords'
Who with me took this work in all their hands.
And if now thou have will to go thy way,
Thou shalt depart right soon with recompense ;
But for all pains that can be put to thee
Thou must not take this on thy tongue again.

PARIS

My lord, I will not.

BOTHWELL

Sirs, with me it rests
To take some order for the burial soon

When the queen's eye hath dwelt upon him dead,
As shall be, lest men say for shame or fear
She would not see him ; then with all privy speed
He shall by night be given here to the worms.
His raiment and his horses will I take
By the queen's gift ; for being now highest in place
I will present me kinglike to the time
And come before men royal, who shall know
I stand here where he stood in all their sight ;
So seeing at once if I be lord or no
He that shall hate me risen shall need take heart
To strike betimes, or strike not. At this hour
Bold heart, swift hand, are wiser than wise brain.
I must be seen of all men's fear or hate,
And as I am seen must see them and smite down
Or lie for ever naked underfoot
Down in the dark for them to triumph on.
That will I not ; but who shall overthrow
Must kill me kingly, sworded hand to hand,
Not snared with gin or limetwig as a fool,
Nor hurled by night up howling into heaven,
But in the sun's eye weaponed. Some of you
Go forth and find what noise is in the streets,
What rumours and how tempered on men's tongues :
When I pass out among them I will take
Some fifty with me to my guard, and ride
As might their king ride. Be it proclaimed abroad
In mine own name and Maitland's and Argyle's
Two thousand pounds shall pay that good man's pains
Who shall produce the murderers of our king
For just and sudden judgment. In few days,
If Mar be not mine unfriend and his own,
Who holds the keys of Stirling, we shall pass
With some of counsel thither, and there bide

Till the first reek of rumour have blown by,
Then call in spring our parliament again.

HEPBURN

Your heart of hope is great ; with God to friend,
A man could speed no better than your hope.

BOTHWELL

I tell thee, God is in that man's right hand
Whose heart knows when to strike and when to stay.
I swear I would not ask more hope of heaven
Than of mine own heart which puts fire to me
And of mine own eye which discerns my day.
And seeing the hope wherein I go now forth
Is of their giving, if I live or die,
With God to friend or unfriend, quick or dead
I shall not wake nor sleep with them that fear
Whose lives are as leaves wavering in a wind,
But as a man foiled or a man enthroned
That was not fooled of fortune nor of fear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another Room in the same*

The body of DARNLEY lying on a bier. Two men in attendance

FIRST ATTENDANT

There is no wound.

SECOND ATTENDANT

Nor hath the fire caught here ;
This gown about him is not singed ; his face

Is clenched together, but on hair nor cheek
Has flame laid even a finger ; each limb whole
And nothing of him shattered but the life.
How comes he dead ?

FIRST ATTENDANT

Tush, tush ! he died by chance.
Take thou no pain to know it. For mine own mind,
I think it was his sickness which being full
Broke as a plague-spot breaks and shattered him
And with his fleshly house the house of stone
Which held him dying ; his malady it was
That burst the walls in sunder and sent up
A ruin of flaming roofs and floors afire.

SECOND ATTENDANT

Was not his chamber-fellow's corpse as his ?

FIRST ATTENDANT

Ay, woundless as they say and unconsumed ;
I know not surely. But the blast that made
The good town ring and rock here through her
streets
Shook not all sleepers in the house to death ;
Three souls have crept forth of the wreck alive
That slept without his chamber.

SECOND ATTENDANT

What say these ?

FIRST ATTENDANT

What should they say, with thanks for their own hap,
But that this chance is dire and this man dead?
There is no more yet for sage lips to say,
That would not timeless be stopped up with earth.

Enter the QUEEN and BOTHWELL

QUEEN

Leave us, and after take your charge again.

FIRST ATTENDANT

We must forbear her till her moan be made. (*Aside.*)
[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

QUEEN

Let me look on him. It is marred not much;
This was a fair face of a boy's alive.

BOTHWELL

It had been better had he died ere man.

QUEEN

That hardly was he yesterday; a man!
What heart, what brain of manhood had God sown
In this poor fair fool's flesh to bear him fruit?
What seed of spirit or counsel? what good hope

That might have put forth flower in any sun ?
We have plucked none up who cut him off at root,
But a tare only or a thorn. His cheek
Is not much changed, though since I wedded him
His eyes had shrunk and his lips grown wan
With sickness and ill living. Yesterday,
Man or no man, this was a living soul ;
What is this now ? This tongue that mourned to me,
These lips that mine were mixed with, these blind eyes
That fastened on me following, these void hands
That never plighted faith with man and kept,
Poor hands that paddled in the sloughs of shame,
Poor lips athirst for women's lips and wine,
Poor tongue that lied, poor eyes that looked askant
And had no heart to face men's wrath or love
As who could answer either,—what work now
Doth that poor spirit which moved them ? To what
use

Of evil or good should hell put this or heaven,
Or with what fire of purgatory annealed
Shall it be clean and strong, yet keep in it
One grain for witness of what seed it was,
One thread, one shred enwoven with it alive,
To show what stuff time spun it of, and rent ?
I have more pity such things should be born
Than of his death ; yea, more than I had hate,
Living, of him.

BOTHWELL

Since hate nor pity now
Or helps or hurts him, were we not as wise
To take but counsel for the day's work here
And put thought of him with him underground ?

QUEEN

I do but cast once more away on him
The last thought he will ever have of mine.
You should now love me well.

BOTHWELL

Ay should I, sweet.

QUEEN

I think you shall ; it were more hard than death
You should not love me.

BOTHWELL

Nay, not possible.

QUEEN

I think God never set in flesh of man
Such heart as yours would be to love me not.

BOTHWELL

Will you give order for his funeral ?

QUEEN

Ay.

But if you loved not—I would know that now
That I might die even this day, and my hands
Shed no more blood nor strive more for your sake ;
For if I live whose life is of your love
I shall take on them more of toil and blood,
To stain and tire them labouring all their life.

I would not die bloodguiltier than is need,
With redder hands than these and wearier heart,
And have no love to cleanse and comfort them.
For this man, I forgive him.

BOTHWELL

For which fault ?

QUEEN

That he touched ever and defiled my life
With life of his and death. I am fain to know
You do not love me for his sake the less
Who so have soiled me with him.

BOTHWELL

Shall I not
Swear it with him for sponsor to mine oath ?

QUEEN

Kiss me before his face here for a sign.

BOTHWELL

You have strange doubts and dreams.

QUEEN

I will not have.
When part we hence, and whither ?

BOTHWELL

I have word
Your careful warden, the grave lord of Mar,
Will hardly give my followers at your prayer

Place to come in to Stirling at our back.
Here now the streets begin to sound and swarm
So that my guard is now for more than pride ;
Wherefore I hold it well we take with us
Some friends of our own counsel, as Argyle,
Huntley, my brother-in-law that shall be none,
With Maitland and the archbishop, and set forth
To the lord Seyton's, who shall give us house
Till this loud world fall stiller than it is.

QUEEN

Be it where you will, and how ; do you but lead,
Would I not follow naked through the world ?
For him of whose dead face mine eyes take leave
As my free soul of shameful thought on him,
Let him have private burial some fit night
By David whom he slew. I mind me now
'Tis not a year since I fled forth with him
Even through the graves where he shall lie alone,
And passing through their dusty deadly ways
For some few minutes of the rustling night
I felt his hand quake ; he will quake not now
To sleep there all night long. See you to that.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *Seyton Castle*LORD HERRIES *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE

HERRIES

So stands it, sir ; she hath put into his hands
Besides the lordship of the port of Leith

The castle's government of Edinburgh,
Of Inchkeith and Blackness, three master keys
That keep the doors o' the kingdom ; in Dunbar
He sits now lord, and gathers men to hold
By her next gift Dumbarton : while she sends
A privy message for a priest to plead
With the French king, that by his mother's mouth
And his own hand hath warned her, if her lord
Sleep unrevenged, she being so shamed henceforth
Must hold them for her enemies, and put off
All thought to flee for fear into their guard
From peril of her subjects—even to him
She sends for payment of her dower foregone
Wherewith to levy hireling bands in France
With but her babe for captain called, and be
Fenced round at least with all of these she may,
Of whose despatch none here must know before,
Nor, if these fail her, of her frustrate aim ;
Then, ere her mourning month be here played out
With hound and horn and soldierlike delights
To recreate her natural heart and life,
She must repass to Holyrood and meet
The ambassador from England, Killegrew,
Who comes to find folk sorrowing and in fear
With counsel for our peril and our grief,
And falls upon us feasting ; and to him
She plights her faith that by this parliament
Shall Bothwell have his trial, and the cause
Be sifted clear in the eyes of all good men ;
Wherewith content he parts, or discontent,
I know not, but is gone ; and she come back
Takes heed no more than of a harp unstrung
What plaint or plea, what charge or menace comes
From her lord's father, but to his demand

For convocation of the nobles made
Returns her word their house shall meet in spring,
And puts his charge by lightly as she may.
Of all this nothing in my mind goes well.

MELVILLE

Nor aught in mine. Your fellows of her faith
Who stand as yet in England on her side
Will fall off from her, hearing what I doubt
All ears will hear too soon : I have shown it her
By letter sent me from a faithful Scot
That long hath wrought among them on her part
And freely thence wrote all his fear for me
To lay before her, and his grief to hear
Such bruit of her intent as could but slay
The opinion of her judgment, who must lose
By such design God's favour and her fame,
And in each kingdom that should kiss her hand
Each man's heart born her heritage, and miss
The noble mark she shot at ; I, adjured
Of him that wrote to bring this in her eye,
Gave her to read it, which she gave again,
Silent ; then came the secretary to me
A short while thence, and took me by the hand,
Desiring me as by the queen's desire
To let him see it, who had given him late to know
I had shown her a strange letter, and devised
By mine own counsel for Lord Bothwell's wreck ;
And having read, What thing was in my mind,
He said, to do this, which being known to the earl,
As shortly there was need to fear it should,
Would cause him surely seek my life ? and I,
It was a sore thing for true men to see
So good a princess run on utter wreck

And no man be so far concerned in her
As to forewarn of peril : he replied
As one who had newly left her wroth, I had done
More honestly than wisely ; bade me fly
Ere the earl came up from dining ; and being flown
I know he sought to slay me, who lay hid
Till his main rage was slackened ; and the queen,
Who had made him swear to seek no scathe of mine
When at their meeting next she showed it him,
Chid him as who would cause her to be left
Of all her servants ; then he swore anew
I should receive no harm ; whereof again
Being advertised I spake with her, and showed
She had never done me so much wrong as this,
To make the letter a device of mine
Which came even whence I had given her word ; and
yet
Had it not come, I had held me bound to speak
Freely, with reverence and humility,
My thought as did that letter, being of mind
At one therewith ; but she would give no ear ;
Nor is there force in counsel or man's wit
To avert this ill she binds upon herself,
Who breaks the bonds in twain that hold her friends,
And fetters her own feet with gyves of steel,
When she hath need of them to stand or flee
Before the face of peril multiform
That lightens on us flamelike : you, my lord,
Whose love she hath proven, are not of me to learn
The immediate feature of it.

HERRIES

Alas, not I ;
I have taken too much note thereof, and stand

Too near its fangs to live of them unscathed,
Except I make haste hence.

MELVILLE

What haste, my lord?

HERRIES

I have spoken with her of their purpose blown
From lip to lip already on men's breath,
To loose the bonds that bind her lover yet
By witness of the lady of Buccleuch,
Who shall proclaim herself his paramour
And precontracted to him by promise-plight,
To prove his wife no lawful wife, but bound,
Will she or no, and love him not or love,
To sue divorce from him ; if all this fail,
Then by remonstrance of their kindred blood
Found some four cousinships away, this bond
Shall melt or break that parts him from the queen.

MELVILLE

Why, ere his marriage with the Lady Jane
She had her dispensation from the Pope,
For the blood mixed between them, of all bars
Which might have maimed it with impediment.

HERRIES

So had she, but they think to cover it
As with a veil of invalidity
Pretexted for pretence, or with dumb show
Darkly disclaimed ; this shall not cumber them ;

And they will buy compliance and goodwill
Of Huntley to his sister's putting off
By restoration of his forfeit lands.

MELVILLE

All tongues i' the land will as one mouth of fire
Cry death and shame against it.

HERRIES

So said I.

MELVILLE

So said you to her ?

HERRIES

I said so ; whereat she,
As 'twere half smiling in a wondering shame,
Half mourning to be guiltlessly misjudged,
With fervent eyes' fall and with scornful lips
Protests me, never had she thought of it.
Wherefore I hold it ill to tarry here.

MELVILLE

Your wisdom shall do well to spare no speed,
But get it gone from eyeshot of them both.

HERRIES

I know it ; yet would I plead again with her
For pity and honour of the imperilled state,
That should be shaken with her fall to death
And the crown shattered into shards of gold
For as a wolf anhungered and awaked

That long hath slept and starved, with foodless
dreams

Assuaging its blunt fangs through bloodless hours,
The common people, that in dumb dim rest,
With heartless hopes assuaging its blind heart,
Hath fed for ages on itself asleep,
Shows now the keen teeth and the kindled eyes
Of ravening heads innumerable, that gape
And glare about the wide ways of the world,
Seeking their meat of God ; and if he fail,
Then of the devil that burns in minds of men
Rebellious, whom their heat of heart eats up
Till the fire fasten on authority
To lay red hands of ruin on all state
And leave in ashes empire ; as of late
This Ket in England, and his like that swarm
At heel of the new creeds in Lutheran lands
To pluck the sun out of the heaven of rule,
And leave men dark and kingless. Hath not Knox
Struck with his fangs of speech on monarchy
No less than on the Church that first was stung,
Preaching for all men knowledge equally
And prostitute and perilous freedom shared
With all blear eyes, brute mouths, and unwashed
hands,

That lust for change and take all fires for light,
Except the sun's wherein their fathers walked ?
And shall not these at any breach break in
That flaws the sea-wall which forbade their sea
To drown all banks that bound it ? She will make
Of all that lived in Scotland hers and ours
A ruin and republic of strewn wrecks,
Ranks rent, bonds broken, all things orderless,
A commonwealth of dead men's bones and dung,

Dust, mire, and blood, and one red rank of beasts
That rage and revel in equality.

MELVILLE

'Tis true, the commons are as waters chafed
Since this wind blew amongst them : wave by wave
It lifts their heads up, and the murmuring air
Breathes hard and blackens with the blast of change.

HERRIES

And were none touched with danger but herself,
This yet were pity enough for tears of blood,
So fair she is and less by place than kind
Royal, so high and so assured of spirit,
So full of all things all men love or fear,
Heart's light and fire, a soul born winged, with eyes
That mate the sun's eye and the lightning's ; yea,
It were past count of pity, past men's thought,
That she should fall for love's light sake self-slain.

MELVILLE

There were one way to serve her that would be
Most thankless, being thankworthiest ; but none else.

HERRIES

That were no way for feet that would not walk
Red as her enemies' did, whose passage shook
With its near sound her life and fame ; such ways
Let Morton take or Maitland's weaponed wit,
Whose words are swords.

MELVILLE

It may be so they will.

HERRIES

Death ?

MELVILLE

Nay, who knows when death may come ?

HERRIES

Why, they

Who strike the spur into his fleshless side,
Who prick him forward with their craft for goad,
Or put for sword their hatred in his hand.
They have done deeds of deadlier policy
Than make submissive show toward Bothwell here,
Then snare and slay him or put the queen in ward :
Would they do this they might be serviceable
But perilous must be, putting hand to work
That treads nigh treason though for loyalty.

MELVILLE

Whoso may know their mind, it is not I.

HERRIES

She hath sent for Murray hither ; in his eye
We may take note which way their faction looks.
If yet toward violence and red-handed craft,
This mood of hers will strip her for their strokes
Naked, and leave us handless that would fight
On her just side against them. God mend all !

*Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, SEYTON, the MARIES,
and Attendants*

QUEEN

The wind has moved my blood like wine ; I am full
Even to the heart's root of its spirit of life.
Flew not my hawk the last flight well, that sent
The tumbling hern down from her highest ? I think
You have none better. Is our brother come ?

SEYTON

He is now alighting, madam.

QUEEN

By this hand,
I would when we must 'light from horse we might
Take wing instead, and so what time we live
Live ever at glad speed save when we sleep.
It points and edges the dull steel of life
To feel the blood and brain in us renew
By help of that life lifting us, and speed
That being not ours is mixed with us and serves.
I would hold counsel and wage war and reign
Not in walled chambers nor close pens of state,
But or in saddle or at sea, my steed
As a sea-wave beneath the wind and me,
Or the sea serving as a bitted steed
That springs like air and fire. Time comes, they say,
When we love rest, house-keeping sloth, and calms ;
To me I think it will not come alive.

HERRIES

Madam, I would change yet one word with you
Ere I go hence or others take your ear.

QUEEN

So shall you, sir ; yet is my heart too light,
And its live blood too merry from the chase,
And all my life too full of the air of joy
Whereon it mounts up falcon-like for prey
And hovers at its wings' width ere it strike,
To give wise words wise welcome ; yet what grace
I may to your grave counsels will I show
And modesty of audience. Tell my brother
I shortly will receive him. [*Exeunt all but the QUEEN
and HERRIES.*] My good lord,
It is for that old honour and true love
I bear your high name and your flawless faith
That yet mine ear makes way now for your words,
In trust they will not wound it for its pains
With any tuneless or intemperate breath.

HERRIES

Had I no heart, or in the heart I have
No love to serve you, madam, and no faith,
I had parted hence without more toil of tongue
Or strife of speech unpalatable and harsh
In ears made wide for music ; but in me
Is heart enough to burn with fire of pain,
If not to lighten with that fire their eyes
For whose sake it consumes me, when I see
Danger and death masked as true men and bold

Attend about them with sheathed knives in hand
And shut mouths as of serpents. Let me not
Incense again your flame of spirit and scorn
With faint and void reiteration of dead words
That spent in vain their spirit before : I speak
Not now so much to move you as would God
I had the might to move, but of myself
Rather to save my soul of faith alive
And my deep heart of duty toward your grace
By speech though fruitless and by love though lost
That will not pass forth silent and give way
To loud-tongued ruin that shall speak too high
For ears to close against it. Queen of Scots,
Lady that have the loftiest life in hand
Even yet that ever was of queen on earth,
Last hope of men that hope through you in God,
Last comfort of his Church, light of his lamp
That men have nigh blown out with blasts of night ;
O you to whose fair face and hand uplift
The treble-kingdomed islands should turn back
Out of the shadow of storm to follow them
And in the shadow of faith instead lie down
Beneath the wings that covered your crowned head,
Even hers that brood above her fold and yours,
The Church your mother's, that by no hand else
Looks yet to gather three lands in and save—
Who have the heart and the eye and the hour for this
Which to none other God may give again
So as you have them—you that should be writ
In all the royal records of the world
Saviour, the light and the right hand of God
Shown in a woman, to bring back and build
What was blown down or shed as dust on the air—
You that have spirit and mind to apprehend

And to that apprehension put swift hand,
Nor slow of soul nor fearful—you, our queen,
And England's heir, that should make higher on earth
The name of Scot than any star in heaven,
And on the cleft growth of two thorny stems
Bid one rose flower of Catholic royalty
Not to be plucked or trampled—O, will you,
So great, so fair and fearless as you are,
That were you no queen, or such other one
As no such high cause calls on, you would seem
Not less a thing made to heroic end,
A creature crowned and armed by God to bear
His witness to his work, and in man's eye
Stand signal-wise lighting the beacons sea—
Will you put all this as a garment off
And change it like a vesture? By your life
Which is the life of this land's majesty,
And your high soul which is our spirit of hope,
Slay not all these ; help them that trust in you ;
Help God, lest we believe him for your sake
Ill-minded toward us for our sin, to turn
This empire to a populous wilderness,
A riotous desert where things vile are crowned,
And high made low and low things set on high,
And rule trod under with foul feet and bare,
And kingdom parcelled by hard hands and red ;
Pity this people ; give not up your realm
To its own madness that takes fire at yours
And lights its ruin at your own ruin, to run
By that blind light darkling to death and hell ;
Cast not your name down under foot of men
For such ill cause as loveless love that is
Light lord of foolish women, or such will
As wherewith men self-slaughtered gird themselves.

For shame and pity and peril shall be they
Who shall attend and wed you to your will,
And the ring broken of the kingdom's peace
That is yet whole and circular as a crown
Shall be the new ring on your wedded hand.

QUEEN

Have I not said I never thought of it?

HERRIES

I but beseech you keep from thought of it,
Or from such show as puts it in men's minds.

QUEEN

If this be all your counsel or your care,
You crave but what you have ; I have given no cause
By favour shown to faith and loyal hearts
For the evil-witted world to tax me of love.
Twice have you had mine ear now to this tale,
And thrice I pray you that you seek it not.

HERRIES

I shall no more. God keep your grace in joy !

Enter BOTHWELL and MURRAY

QUEEN

Good morrow, brother ; and you, my lord, good day,
Since you go hence.

BOTHWELL

Goes my lord from us yet?

HERRIES

Even now I take my leave. Farewell, my lords,
And God be with your counsels. [*Exit.*]

BOTHWELL

Nay, he shall.
The queen was fain to have your voice, my lord,
Ere she go back to the distempered town.

MURRAY

That shall she have, sir.

QUEEN

Brother, we hear word
How the good town is troubled of lewd men
With libels writ and hung about the streets
That in our servants' name deface our own
With fierce invention : wherefore I desired
Your counsel with my lord here and good help
For satisfaction of well-willing men.

MURRAY

Even such will tell you it mislikes the town
That Lennox, as they say, should be debarred
From entrance save with six men and no more
To hold his cause up on the trial day,
And the main witness on his part refused

As under charge of treason for his words
Set forth in writing on the Tolbooth gates :
This makes them doubt of justice to be done
And brood or babble of devised delay,
With tongues and minds diverse and dangerous.

QUEEN

What,

Shall one proclaimed our traitor pass unscathed
To bear again false witness, for whose sake
The ports are guarded, and the skipper marked
For death who helps him from this kingdom forth
To mock the judgment whence he stands attaint
Of foregone treason, and must now stand free,
And the law loose him and receive his word
As a true man's and taintless ? What are they
Whom by such witness Lennox would impeach
Besides my lord here who shall answer him ?

MURRAY

James Balfour, and your outland serving-folk,
Sebastian, Joseph Rizzio, with two French,
John of Bordeaux, and Francis, of your train.

QUEEN

They shall have trial, and answer it.

MURRAY

'Twere best

They did so soonest ; time grows full of tongues ;
There was one late went through the streets by night
With four or five accompanied for guard

That would let none take knowledge of him, crying
Of his own guilt most lamentably on God,
Lord, open heaven and pour down of thy wrath
Vengeance on me and them that have cut off
The innocent blood ; whom the chief magistrates
Have seized and cast into the four thieves' pit ;
But still his cry hangs in the common ear.

QUEEN

Some traitor hired or madman : but I sent
To seek the comfort of your hand and help
For weightier cause than of such tongues.

MURRAY

What cause ?

QUEEN

That shall he show who bears most part therein ;
Yet are you parcel of it, and I myself
For love of both and honour toward you. Speak.
[To BOTHWELL.

BOTHWELL

My lord, I doubt not but your heart conceived
Never that thing whereto being done you feared
To set your hand in sign ; I therefore pray you
To look upon the charge for which I stand
In the land's eye accountable, as one
That was consenting with the rest our friends
To what for my poor profit was not done
Nor only plotted for no end but mine ;
And for the part your honour has herein
To underwrite the bond that writes me safe
And set your name for seal upon my side.

QUEEN

So much would I beseech you too ; the bond
By you subscribed here in my lord's defence
Shall be the signet of your faith and love
Set on my heart and his that honour you.

MURRAY

I would my duty might in all things serve
No less your honour than maintain mine own ;
But I will set no hand to any bond
Shall bind me to defence or fellowship
Of deeds whereof I know myself no part.
I gave consent to no more than divorce
Between two hands mismated, king's and queen's,
Whereby the kingdom's heart was rent in twain,
And reconcilment found not where to stand ;
But of no red and secret bond of blood
Heard I the bruit before the deed took fire.

BOTHWELL

Will you so swear ? what, none ?

MURRAY

I have said ; and you
That reft your kinsman Balfour by device
Out of my hand and thwarted judgment, see
Your heart be set not now to climb too high
A stair whereon the foot that slips grows red
And stumbling once in blood falls whence nor wing
Nor hand can lift it from the pit again,

QUEEN

Vex not yourself lest he should fall or stand
With whom you stand or fall not.

BOTHWELL

My desire
Was toward no help of riddling counsellors,
But of such friends as speak with hand for tongue
And acts for parables ; your wit, my lord,
Is nothing of the queen's need nor of mine.

MURRAY

It may be, no ; but to make trial of that,
Ere I take ship for France, the ways being barred
By force and strife through Flanders to the south
And those fair towns that with her highness' leave
Shall call me guest awhile in Italy,
I am bound for London, where I fear and hope
My tongue may serve her more than here your hands
If it make fair her cause in English eyes.

BOTHWELL

What hath her cause to do with their bleared sight,
Or with her name their judgment ? who need care
What colour we that breathe with our own lips
Wear in the mist made of their breath far off ?

MURRAY

The ambassador that bore her last word back
Hath but made way for one at point to come
Whose message, carrying weight as in wise ears

It needs must carry, will take form and force
From present witness of his eye that reads
What mind is borne here and what work is done,
What judgment or what counsel most bears weight ;
Which it imports us for this land's great sake
That the English queen misknow not nor misread
For fault or fraud of darkling evidence.

BOTHWELL

And you it is must give those blind eyes sight,
Shape to the shadows of that ignorance, form
To their loose judgment of us ? What have we,
What hath our Scotland here or queen of Scots
To do with English tongues ? can we not strike
Nor stand nor walk alone, but for our need
Must use their hands and feet, their wits and eyes,
To help us live or live not ? By my life,
Which is not held in pawn yet of their leave,
I had rather be an English horse or ass
Than on these terms a Scot, to square my will
By their inscribed conditions.

MURRAY

At your will
Lies your own way of life ; not yet this land's,
Nor theirs that living should be lords of it.
Madam, to God's care I commend your grace
Who take with careful heart my leave of you,
Lest you too much should lack the care of men.

QUEEN

Be not too careful for my sake ; your leave
Was given ere you could take it. Sir, farewell.

MURRAY

Farewell, as you shall will it.

[*Exit.*]

BOTHWELL

God be with you !

Your wisdom shall not be so hot of foot
But it may be outspeeded. If it lay
Plots with the stranger, our prevention here
Must pluck the fangs out of its craft ; and first
With his own hand shall Huntley draw the bond
Whereto will we set ours in pledge ere long
To make them fast by contract, I being free
To plight mine own, as by consent unbound
From hers that was my wife pretended ; you,
Being by this troublous time bent and inclined
To seek some stay in wedlock and put off
The weak estate of widowhood, yet loth
For worthy reasons of grave strength to choose
Again a stranger subject, have made choice
Of me desertless for my fair deserts,
And purpose even on heel of my divorce
For their good cause to wed me ; this subscribed
Shall in my keeping be laid up, and straight
Hence must we back to that loud town of yours
And take our danger by the throat ; proclaim
At once my trial ; if it be possible,
Before word come from England ; let the post
That brings you counsel of Elizabeth's
Find the cause judged and the cry fallen again
And no link hanging of the gyves of law
Round our free feet and steadfast.

QUEEN

Ah, not mine,
That are fast bound and yet can stand not fast
Except my love's strength hold them up, and strike
These iron toils in sunder. If the bond
Could bind and loose indeed, knit and unknit
Hands that must part from hands that are to meet,
With force of more than writing, all my heart
Should bleed glad drops to sign and seal it. Sir,
Here was again our enemy in mine ears
Forewarning me of marriage ; the same tongue
That was before a serpent at your heel
Shot out anew to sting it ; but you know
The craft of this state horseleech, that by fraud
Takes pleasure to bear all the world in hand
That no one can be sure of him, and we
May least of all be by such lips allured
To trust and find them dangerous.

BOTHWELL

Nay, by God,
I mind me how he left his neighbour friends
In his faith's name to hang for hostages
Whose necks paid forfeit of his broken bond
And made his oath a halter for the Lairds
Of Lochinvar and Garlies. By my life
That this keen tongue would strike at, in my mind
It were the best work worth a good man's hand
To quit them on Lord Herries.

QUEEN

No, let be ;
You will unpeople me this land of friends ;

Mine he must live, or lose his name, and yours
For my name's sake he shall be.

BOTHWELL

So might I
Find at his hands such friendship as they twain
Whose throats for him were writhen ; and such a friend
Is he that stands behind our deed, and says
He never heard of manslaying, fie, not he,
Our darkling brother with close lips and clean,
The blood was no part of his bond, he says,
That his eyes winked on while his hand was dry ;
He will not bear us witness nor take part
With me that have done more than blink at blood.
He will to London, but to speak for you,
That will he, being a kindly man of kind,
Whole-blooded in his love and faith to you,
God wot, no bastard in his brotherhood.
I would give God a year out of my life
That I have kinglike hope to live with you
For one sweet breath of time to strike at him
And let my sword's lip drink his body dry
And with one deep kiss drain his flesh of blood.
Who smells not by the savour of his faith
On what close nest of foul and fledgling hopes
His trust sits brooding to build up himself
By overthrowing of that crowned head which keeps
His misbegotten forehead bare of gold—
And with my hand shall keep it?

QUEEN

Ay, though all
That breathe on earth mine enemies at his beck
Rose by the light of his ambiguous eyes

With his sheathed hand to strike, and leave ungirt
This forfeit head with empire : but I know
A stronger hand bared for my help and stay,
This that I touch, this that I love ; the star
That points my feet on pilgrimage, the staff
That stays my steps back to that troublous town
Whereof they are weary, yet would halt not now,
But tread more fleet than fire their fiery way
To that fair end where they were fain to be.
We will set forth to-morrow.

BOTHWELL

Ere we go,
I will take order that men's tongues be clipt
Who show too broad their conscience of remorse ;
There was a knave of Balfour's in our trust
That hath by this, being found unsure of mouth,
Resigned it to the counsel-keeping worm.
If more there be that live not stingless yet,
The same dumb mouth that has nor lips nor tongue
Must open for them privily ; the grave
Hath gorge enough for all such secret food,
And will not babble of the hands that feed.
For them that being in blood of our own kind
Will stand elsewhere against me than in court,
I will make present proffer of myself
To answer them in arms.

QUEEN

You shall not fight.

BOTHWELL

Not if no need be.

QUEEN

There shall be no need.
Not in this cause, you shall not need to fight.
We will set on the trial presently,
And after we may sleep with no blood more.

SCENE IV. *The Upper Chamber in Holyrood**The QUEEN and MARY BEATON*

QUEEN

Is it not hard on ten ?

MARY BEATON

At point to strike.

QUEEN

This forenoon will outlast the night for length.
How looks the morning ?

MARY BEATON

Like the time of year ;
The heaven is red and full of wind ; the clouds
Are rent and routed of the striving sun
Like a lost army.

QUEEN

Is there no noise abroad ?

MARY BEATON

The throngs grow thick in rumour ; faces scowl,
Eyes burn, brows bend, and all the cry o' the crowd
Waits to break forth but till a fire-flaught fall
To make the dumb brands speak and shoot out flame
When he shall pass for whom it waits to burn.
Yet have I seen as great a throng from hence
As frets there now.

QUEEN

I would he had thought to-day
To ride with doubled guard. What brawl is there ?

MARY BEATON

The messenger from Berwick, as I think,
That would have entrance to you, and is thrust back
By the lord Bothwell's kin that keep the gates.

QUEEN

What, here so soon ? I will not see him till night.
I am asleep ; if there be brawls i' the court,
Call out the troopers, bid my French guard forth
To quell all rioters.

MARY BEATON

They are of your own part
That make the brawl, my lord's men and your guard
That press about the gateway.

QUEEN

The cry sinks ;
Is he not come, that so their noise is fallen ?

MARY BEATON

And Maitland with him ; he signs them silent, takes
From the English messenger a letter sealed,
And leaves all still.

QUEEN

I prayed him see me first
Before he rode to trial. All will be well,
If he have stayed their storm, and keep his heart
High as his fortune.

Enter BOTHWELL

Is that brawl at end ?

BOTHWELL

Here is a letter by a hot-foot post
Brought from Sir William Drury, that his queen
Through him commends her counsel in to you
And bids you, or my thought belies it, show
All favour and furtherance to your enemy's plea,
Lennox, whose cause she finds most fair, and would
not

For your own sake see slighted or put by,
Lest your fame bleed ; look if she say not so ;
Else I know nothing of her maiden mind,
Who sometime lived her prisoner.

QUEEN

Let that rest ;
But tell me what the spring was of this noise
That shook our hearing ; would he speak perforce,
This English post, though bidden back, with me ?

BOTHWELL

But that our fellows thrust him from the gate ;
My captain of the castle, a stalwart guard,
The Laird of Skirling, that I put in charge,
Called to the guide aloud, he should be hanged
For bringing English villains through to us here,
And hands were there to reive the rope to him ;
Then drew your guard together and our troops,
Whose musters line the straitened streets with steel
That holds embanked their muttering multitudes
Till I ride through ; and those within the gates
Hurtled together with blind cries and thrusts,
But at my sight fell silent as a sea
Settling, that growls yet with the sunken wind,
And holds its peace with unslaked wrath ; then I
Took from the pressed and labouring messenger
His letter for your hand, who were not risen
And should ere night receive him ; so I said,
And thus it shall suffice you do, so be it
We bear the bell to-day in parliament,
Where I should be by this at bar, to stand
And make mine answer.

QUEEN

I am not sick of fear,
Yet my heart loathes its burden of this hour
And beats and drops like a bird wounded. Nay,
I do not hold you ; go ; 'tis but my hand
Fastens on yours ; my heart would have you gone,
And here again to assure me of good speed.
Whom have we of the judges on our side,
Tell me once more, whom doubtful-coloured, whom

Our enemies certain ? let me know it again,
That I may read the bede-roll of their names
Here over in my heart while you are gone
To make it sure and strong, come evil or good,
That neither find me heartless.

BOTHWELL

Of our part

The lord of Arbroath for the Hamiltons
Is as his father's person, Chatelherault,
And Cassilis a mainstay safe as steel ;
Caithness and Herries are such friends of yours
As love me less for your sake, yet I think
Must strike to-day beside us ; one man most
I would we might have razed out of the roll,
Which is the assessor, Lindsay ; who shall be
As poison to us ; and evil is our chance
That Morton being of kin to your dead man
Should not sit here to help, as but for this
I would perforce have bound him to our side ;
But let this be ; we shall bear bravely through
For all their factions and fierce policies
As knives ensheathed against us, or being foiled
Find surer issue than they wot of. So,
With such good hope as grows of a good heart,
Give me God-speed.

QUEEN

God speed you as I pray

You may speed ever ; all my prayer is spent,
I can no more of wishing ; what I would,
That must you will, having my heart in you,
That beats but with your blood, thrills with your sense,
Thinks with your thought, desires with your desire,

And lives upon your living. Where you go
You bear me with you ; where your face is set
Mine eye takes outlook, and where falls your foot
I tread beside you silent. O, this day
Shall be to us as the crown o' the wave that turns
And bears inshore the lading of our lives
With all the might of its great heart that breaks
And brings us into harbour ; we shall stand
High on the beach where it was spent, and praise
The faithful hour that served us ; yea, even this
Shall be a dear one to us, held fast at heart
When all the pain and doubt of it is dead,
And lovingly remembered ; you shall look
From your high place beside your humble love
With kingly eye on this dead day, and think
How she that set her crown about your head
And put her own beneath your foot, as now
Bade you fare forth, and kissed you.

BOTHWELL

I am returned,

Ere I pass forth, already in my heart,
With my cause crowned ; I cannot doubt of speed
Who have your face before mine eyes as fire
And keep your words' heat in mine ear to burn
If I should shrink, and sting my spirit alive
For love's and shame's sake. When we meet at night,
A king's kiss will I set upon these lips
That seal me royal ere I part. Farewell. [Exit.

QUEEN

I would mine eye were in my heart to go
With that beside him ; but the heart it is

Sits now in the eye and follows where it may,
But a street's length ; then part they, and the sight
Turns back, but not the thought ; such wings it hath
As the sight hath not, and is subtler nerved
Than the swift spirit of the eye. O my life's light,
This is not I that looks forth after you
To feed her eyesight, but who leaves you not,
Who rides beside you, breathes out of your lips,
Looks through your eyes and triumphs in your heart,
That unseen and inseparate thing is I.
Look, he is up ; how royally he rides,
As no king else on earth ! and waves to me
As who should say, Be glad ; and glad I am,
Who have the lordliest lover in the world
And the most heart to love him. Ay, that steed
Should be the higher of heart that feels him stride
And moves the merrier-mettled ; by none such
Was it before bestridden.

MARY BEATON

Was not this
Lord Darnley's horse ?

QUEEN

Ay, when Lord Darnley was.

MARY BEATON

The horse he loved of all the rest and fed
Ere he bestrode it ever ?

QUEEN

Like enough ;
What ails it yet to have eaten of his hand ?
It bears not now the worse a better man,

MARY BEATON

Nay, so it seems : it bounds not as in wrath,
For aught I see, beneath him, but heaves up
A sidelong head toward his new hand, and turns
The light back on him of a joyful eye.
So is it with only beasts that are beloved ;
They have not hearts like ours.

QUEEN

What need they have?

I would have nothing love him as I love,
And had it heart it would ; yet I do think
All beasts and men are mad that love him not
As I should surely were I beast or man.
He can no longer see my handkerchief ;
Let us go in : I will not sit and wait
With the street's hustling faces in my sight. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. *The High Court of Justice in the
Tolbooth*

BOTHWELL, *with ORMISTON and others attending, at the bar ;*
ARGYLE *presiding as Lord Justice ;* LINDSAY *as assessor ;* CAITH-
NESS, CASSILIS, ROTHES, ARBROATH, MAXWELL, HERRIES,
and others, as jury ; ROBERT CUNNINGHAM *as spokesman for*
Lennox.

ORMISTON (*aside to BOTHWELL*)

Fie, look not down so at your feet, my lord ;
What devil is this that irks you ? in your face
A fool might read you what you are ; why, so
Might a man look that were now going to death.
Hold up your face for God's sake and look blithe ;

Alas and aye woe worth them that devised
The thing that shall make all us mourn, I trow,
For you that now look sadly.

BOTHWELL

Hold your peace ;
I would not yet it were to do ; I have
An outgate any way whereby to pass,
As ye shall know, and soon. Trouble me not.

ARGYLE

My lords, ye have heard how to the indictment read
The accused who stands at his own instance here
Returns his plea of guiltless ; and thereon
The accuser next invoked to approve his charge,
Nor answering nor appearing, leaves no cause
For us to judge ; but here in his default
Is risen his servant to sustain his part
And unawares among us unrequired
Take up this charge here fallen, or stretch at least
Some form across of pretext wide enough
To cover with excuse this lack of charge,
Which else might seem with emptiness of cause
To mock your judgments ; wherefore, if ye will,
He stands to plead before us.

CAITHNESS

We are content.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM

My lords, I am here but in my master's name,
The earl of Lennox, to declare what cause

This day constrains his absence ; which in brief
Is first the brief time given for so great work,
Next that he stands now naked of his friends
And fellowship of servants to maintain
His honour with the surety of his life ;
And having help of no friend but himself,
He hath laid on me commandment to desire
A day sufficient for that weight of cause
Which he shall have to keep it ; and if hence
Your lordships at this present shall proceed,
Here I protest that if the assize to-day,
By their twelve persons that upon this charge
Shall enter now on panel, speak him clear
Who stands accused for murder of the king,
It shall be wilful error in men's eyes
And not abuse of ignorance, by this cause
That all men know him for murderer ; and hereto
Upon this protestation I require
Of your high court a document to stand
And set my lord's right here on register
And those men's wrong who put it by to-day.

ARGYLE

This is some reason if the ground be good
Whereon his protest is built up, to excuse
Default of witness by defect of time ;
But here that ground is shaken, that we find,
By letters of his own writ to the queen,
My lord of Lennox earnest to bring on
With forward expedition as of fire
This cause for trial, and by all pleas intent
To enforce this court make haste, and being convoked
Despatch with breathless justice and short stay

The work wherein he seems to accuse us now
For too much heat to move too fast, and mar
The perfect end of trial with force of speed,
Preventing him of witness. Wherefore then
Was his own will so keen, his plaint so loud,
So strong his protestation, to procure
The speed too late reproached, too soon required?
Here are we met for judgment, whom himself
Bade the queen summon, with insistent heat
And sharp solicitation urged of wrong,
Nay, with the stroke of an imperative tongue,
As though to impel some loth or laggard heart,
And found instead a free and forward will
In her to meet his own; here sits the court,
There stands the man of him or his impeached
To give them loyal answer; where sits he?
Where speaks his proof? where stand his witnesses?
What sentence of what judges shall be given
Where none stands forth to accuse? Here are but
words,
Surmises, light and loud and loose, that blow
In the air of nameless lips and babblers' breath
From ear to ear about the wide-mouthed world;
These are not for our judgment.

CAITHNESS

We sit here

To find if there be proof or likelihood
More than of common tongues that mark a man
Guilty, and know not why this man or that,
But some name they must have to feed upon;
And in my mind, where witness there is none
Nor prosecution of a personal cause,
Even should we err to find the accused man free,

It were no wilful error, nor this court
In any just man's sight accountable
As for unrighteous judgment, being cut off
From evidence that it was met to hear ;
Which we reject not, but require indeed,
Yet can by no solicitous mean procure.
Moreover, sirs, one flaw there is to note
More evident than these proofs invisible
Even in the letter of the charge, which bears,
Ye see, the ninth day's date of February,
When all we know that on the tenth it was
This violence, by what hand soe'er, was done :
So that I see not, for my simple part,
How any man, for that which no man did,
Should stand condemned ; for at this date assigned
Was no such deed as this done in the world.

MAXWELL

Why, let the charge be drawn again, and straight ;
The court is mocked in this.

CAITHNESS

How mocked, my lord ?

It is necessity of law, to keep
Pure hands by perfect heed of flawless words ;
And that you stood the dead man's friend alive
Gives you not right nor reason to rise up
And tax the reason or the right of law.

MAXWELL

Right ! where is right in all this circumstance,
Or aught but wrong and broken judgment ? where

Justice or shame or loyalty, to try
The truth whereon red fraud and violence tread
And smother up the tongueless cry of blood ?
Are we not here to judge of murder done,
And either from an innocent brow take off
The spot of its suspicion, or convince
The branded forehead of bloodguiltiness ?
Is there no counsel on the part accused
Nor answer of defensive argument
But of close-lipped evasion ? and the court
In this forsooth is mocked not ! We shall stand
The shameful signs of laughter to the world
And loathing to men loyal, if this pass
With no more trial but mockery, and the land
Sit silent and attaint of innocent blood
Before the face of all men that expect
For our own sake what justice we shall show
Or be defamed for ever.

ARBROATH

Sirs, meseems

Where no charge is that no response can be,
Where none impeaches, none can stand accused :
And of what mouth what challenge is put forth,
And on what witness what impeachment hangs,
To implead of guilt the man we sit to try ?
Herein I say it is the court is mocked,
Even all of us, and all the baffled land,
And most this noble man that unaccused
Stands at our bar and finds not to confront
One witness, nor one enemy to beat back,
But only as 'twere a wind that sounds, a breath
That shifts and falters in the face of proof,

A blast that envy blows and fear breaks off,
Disabled of its nature, by itself
Frustrate and maimed of its own evil will.

LINDSAY

Who talks of envious or of fearful heart ?
We hear the general judgment of the land
Cry out for trial, and from foreign tongues
Reproach cast on us that we cast off heed ;
What should we do for shame if in this cause,
For doubt of one man's friends or of what power
Might stand behind to buckler him at need,
We durst not move, nor, though the world looked on,
Show but a face of justice ?

CASSILIS

Must we set
Our judgments by the common tongue that strikes
And knows not what the hour is ? or become
Thralls to the praise and bondmen to the blame
Of men by no tie blood-bound to our love,
To make our lives look in their foreign sight
Fair, lest they speak us evil ? By my head,
No Scot I hold him, but a strange man's knave,
Whose spirit is shrunk or swollen by their breaths.

ARGYLE

Well, let the votes be given, and each man's doom
Affirm if in his true and equal mind
The charge be proven upon my lord or no.
How go the voices ?

LINDSAY

By one half their dooms
The lords here of the jury speak him free
With clear acquittal of bloodguiltiness ;
One half is voiceless.

ARGYLE

He then is proclaimed
Of this high court not guilty, and the charge
On trial stands not good against him. Sir,
The court upon this plea declares for you
You are found free of blood.

BOTHWELL

My noble lords,
Being proved thus in your judgments clear of crime,
Here on this door will I to-day set up
My personal challenge in mine honour's right
To meet in arms, before what judge he will,
What gentleman soever undefamed
Shall take upon him to confront my cause.
For their lewd mouths who threat and wear no sword,
Your judgment given to acquit me shall abash
The malice it puts power into mine arm
With might of right to baffle. Sirs, good day.
[Exit with ORMISTON and his followers.]

ARGYLE

Break up the court ; the cause is judged.

MAXWELL (*to* LINDSAY)

Is judged?

I know not of such seed what stem will spring,
But that fruit sour as gall and red as blood
For men's false mouths must of this judgment grow
I would I saw less surely than I see.

SCENE VI. *The High Street*

BURGESSES *and* PEOPLE

FIRST CITIZEN

What more of shame is laid up for us? when
Will heaven put forth a hand to touch with fire
These naked sins and shrivel? Have you heard
What last lies bare for judgment?

SECOND CITIZEN

Why, the last
Is not this half-hour's shame; each stroke each day
Strikes out a fresh one, that five minutes old
Dies of the next forgotten. Yesterday
Some talk was of the challenge yet, which now
No man casts thought on, though by two good swords
Was battle proffered: by the stout Laird first
Of Tullibardine, in that brother's name
Whom they for fear have taxed of treason, so
To eschew his proof and peril; he defies
The challenger to combat, and requires
England and France for judges of the field
In person of their sovereigns; this refused,

On such new plea as craven craft may find,
With his queen's leave the ambassador himself
Of England gladly with his own heart's will
Would take the personal cause upon him.

FIRST CITIZEN

What !

Is it for fault of Scots to match and mate
The pride in Bothwell swoln with innocent blood
None but Sir William Drury may be held
Worth his sword's wrath that walks by night ?

THIRD CITIZEN

Perchance

As for his queen he stands here deputy,
And for our own her champion opposite
Afield with swords' play or abed with lips',
They hold the match more equal.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Nay, this news

Is grey of beard already ; hear you not
How by this priestly parliament of ours,
That to beguile us and for no goodwill
Hath in the queen's name passed its act to affirm
God's present gospel stablished in this realm,
The murderer lives now twice absolved of blood
And has by voice of prelates and of earls
The assize allowed for good that purged him first,
And shall be loosened of his marriage bond
That twelve months since was tied ? his brother-in-law
Shall have again his forfeit lands, and see
His sister from her married bed thrust out,
And stir no finger ; then without more stay

Who sees not where the adulterer's foot shall climb
And by what head his own be pillowed? nay,
These papers hung against our walls by night
Are tongues that prophesy but truth; ye saw
That likeness of a hare enringed with swords
And of a mermaid crowned with burning eyes
Who drove the hounds off with a two-thonged
scourge

That coursed him trembling; and her hand indeed
Is found not slow to smite; a law now lives
Denouncing on his head no less than death
Who shall set up, or seeing shall pluck not down,
Such placards writ: the first soe'er who finds
And leaves the writing that defames her friend
To pass among the people, at her will
Shall lie in bonds; but if this brand herself,
Then must the man that spared it or that set
Die; so the fire-eyed queen of shipwreck sings
Death in their ears who sail this dangerous sea
Whereon the ship reels of our staggering state,
And with the flame shot from her eyes puts out
The light of theirs that were as lightnings turned
On her hare-hearted lover.

THIRD CITIZEN

Yet they lack
The power with boast or menace to seal up
The lips of poor men; but three days ago
As she rode through the Grassmarket I heard
How from their stalls the women cried on her,
God save your grace! but with this added word
That smote the smile upon her lips to death,
If ye be spotless of the dead king's blood.

SECOND CITIZEN

Such words and souls mount nigher God's ear and eye
Than theirs who lent this man their hands to slay
And tongues to purge him of their general sin,
He of St. Andrew's and his under priest,
Bishop of Ross, Leslie and Hamiltons
Whose lips are bloody, and that double soul
Argyle, that steers their faction ; and this crew
Masked here as mouthpiece of the loathing land
Must hide the people's heart and true men's truth
With craft of prattling prelates ; yet such mouths
As are unlocked and locked again with gold
But gape till God shall pluck their tongues out.

FIFTH CITIZEN

Yea,

Ye hear but this, and have to burn your ears
No hotter news of these men, or what bond
Bears written broad and brave such names as these
Of earls and bishops ? this is strange yet, sirs,
That fires my cheek to tell you ?

SECOND CITIZEN

Why, men said

There was a knot that met of these to sup
Shut in with Bothwell's hackbutter for guard
That drew round Ainslie's Tavern where they sat
Like a strait hoop of steel to bind them safe
And hold them fast from starting ; and some bond
Of these his guests at Bothwell's prayer subscribed
There was that bound them to him, against all foes
That might impeach him of the crime discharged
By the open court's acquittal, from this day

To take his part upon them and stand fast
As to their own cause, being made subject all
To slander and suspicion that but grows
Of honour and high credit held with kings :
So much we heard, and found not strange.

FIFTH CITIZEN

Nay, this

Was but the grace that served their banquet in
Of meats as strong as poison ; there ensued
A pledge more mortal of a bond more base ;
Considering this time present, how the queen
Stood husbandless, and how the general weal
Might let her not long live so, should her mind
By thought of his true services be moved
To take the earl Bothwell to her loving lord,
They and each man there met of them should plight
His honour, truth, and heart's fidelity
To advance this marriage with all furtherance given
Of counsel, satisfaction, and good help
As soon as law might give it leave to be,
And as their common enemy should esteem
What man soever of evil will to them
Might seek its hindrance ; and to this were set
More than those names ye spake of ; be it for fear,
For craft or vantage, none of these fell off
Save Eglinton that slipped for shame away,
And Morton with the secretary, that gave
Their voice yet for this marriage, but would seal
No general bond of service on his side :
Save these, no priest or peer of them but lives
His servant pledged ; their hands, tongues, counsels,
 hearts,
His or not theirs, and all they mansworn men.

THIRD CITIZEN

I have assurance of a true man's faith
That word was writ of this confederacy
To the English council from the Laird of Grange,
Desiring knowledge with what ear their queen
Shall take these tidings ; and albeit of late
In all our trouble being found slow to help
She hath lost the love here borne her, if her grace
For this late murder will pursue revenge,
She shall win all the hearts of all the best
Again, he says, in Scotland ; who should be,
With her good help and favour, swift to take
This vengeance on them, and redeem from fear
Their prince's life now trembling in the reach
Of hands that slew his father ; for our queen
Hath sworn she cares not for her lover's sake
To lose France, England, and her natural land,
And would go with him to the wild world's end
Stript to her smock ere leave him.

SECOND CITIZEN

Has he writ
So much to the English court of her ? being ours,
He should let shame keep silence of her shame.

FIRST CITIZEN

What shame or silence can shut up for shame
That which at noon walks clamorous of itself
And boastful to be naked ? They will wed,
Though thunder sound forth sin, and while God
speaks
Will kiss in sight of lightning.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Was there not
Some noise of strife arisen for fault of pay
Among their crew of Bothwell's villains here
That hold by force of hand the palace gates?

SECOND CITIZEN

Such rumour was, for certain; and himself
Strode in among the middle mutiny
Like a thieves' captain, and being braved of them
Caught by the throat one that was lord o' the brawl
And would have slain but for the throng that cried
And drove upon him shouting, till for fear
He was even fain to stop with promises
Their mouths who clamoured; which to see fulfilled
Needs must he sit no lower than doth a king.

THIRD CITIZEN

So then the gates are open, and the queen
By leave of these her guards and him their chief
May part in peace for Stirling now to see
Her son in ward there of the castellan?
Where we, God knows, may give him thanks that
one
So wise as the earl of Mar and stout of heart
Hath our born king in covert, who might sleep
On that sweet breast that bore him not so safe
As in a hand so honest.

FIRST CITIZEN

Ay, God help,
There is no surety in such housekeeping

As thunder comes forth of the sky by night
To fall upon and burn it, yet no storm
Save of men's making seen, nor fire in heaven
Save what rose up from under. Verily,
Our good lord Bothwell spake but truth who said
To good James Melville how so strange a thing
On earth was never known of: pity 'tis
He could not come to look upon the corpse
Though Bothwell bade him, seeing it was removed;
It was his hapless chance to find it gone
And in safe keeping of some secret hand
That waited on it living; such things are:
The worse hap his. They say it had no wound;
So if by some mischance, as God forbid,
The prince were reft unluckily of life,
I think he should have none for eye to see
That might read evil.

THIRD CITIZEN

Who shall ride with her?

SECOND CITIZEN

Why, no great train, lest being within the walls
She take the child into her hand and give
For better care to Bothwell's, with the keys
That keep this castle too; but yet I think
His hand nor hers shall put God's judgment back
That waits to take them triumphing, and turn
To tears their laughter and our grief to joy.

SCENE VII. *Stirling Castle**The QUEEN and HUNTLEY*

QUEEN

Will you go back from us ?

HUNTLEY

I like it not ;
I do not see how this may be made good.

QUEEN

There is no flaw but in your fainter heart ;
The way is fair and even ; I cannot think
What seed is in men's hearts that brings forth fear
Out of all season. Why are you so sad ?
The thing is no more dangerous than it was
When our first plot was laid ; nay so much less
By how much these are ours whose names and bonds
Speak on our side inscribed.

HUNTLEY

Madam, not so ;
The earl of Sutherland, whose forfeiture
Your grace but now remitted with mine own,
When we shall meet my brother's men in arms,
Will die before he yield you to their hands.

QUEEN

My lord, you have no brother of him now
That was your sister's husband. I will write

To bid him bring up men enough to outmatch
All that ride with us homeward, and so far
That none the hardiest shall but think on fight.
Three hundred hath your earl? then in his rank
There shall be more than of our company,
That I to spare men's blood may yield myself.

HUNTLEY

It is too gross and foolishly devised ;
When I spake last with him, he laid on you
The charge to say where we should meet and when,
And what should by contrivance plead for me,
To save my name though you be yielded up
Who ride with me for escort ; all this charge
He lays on you, and bids me write again
What you shall say by letter ; of himself
He moves not yet ; and I beseech you think,
Before you move him, in what enterprise
You put to pledge your honour, that can never
With honour wed him who being wedded man
By force and violent hand hath borne you off ;
Nor will my folk endure it, I wot well,
But it must come to trial by hap of fight
With doubt and accident of answering arms ;
Where if we fail on our part, then on his
Shall be the blame and bloody note of war
Made on your personal guard ; but if we win
That ride with you as followers, then is he
The most forlorn of men revolted ; else,
I shall be called of all that sin on earth
The most unthankful traitor, who being now
But newly of your grace remade your man
Shall yield you up by treason without blows

Into a rebel's handling ; and the lords,
I doubt, when they shall see you in his hold,
Will think not much to unswear their oaths, deny
Their words and hands as given through force or
fear,
And signed not of their hearts ; I pray, think of it,
And take some other counsel to your mind.

QUEEN

My lord, if you bear back my word to him,
It shall be this : that seeing I am come so far,
If of his own will he withdraw him not,
For no persuasion nor for death itself
Will I be brought to break my faith with him.
For this you say of them that follow you
And of your fear to bear a thankless name
For my supposed betraying, you should by now
With him have taken counsel of the chance,
And not have thrown it here across my way
Who have no choice to pass not over it,
Seeing I may turn not back for life or death,
For fear or shame or love of any man.
As for the place, he doth not well to cast
On me too even the election ; let him choose,
And send me word, with pardon that herein
I tax my lord of too much negligence.
For those your followers whom you most misdoubt,
You shall be wise to weed our train of them
If any wise mean be to draw them forth.
This is my counsel, of a simple wit
And womanish, but not so vile at heart
As to go back for danger from its faith.
I pray you so report of me, and say,

When he shall ask you of my mind again,
No more but this word only ; and farewell.

[*Exit* HUNTLEY.]

This faint-heart honesty with half a hand
Is falser found at need than falsehood's self,
And ever was of me more hated. O,
That I might take these hours as in my hand
And men that yet divide us, with one grasp
To gripe them dead and pluck his fang from time
That waits to fasten on us unawares
And make love mortal with the kiss that kills !
A day and night are as a long life's length
That part the hungering from the perfect hour,
The void from the fulfilling.—Nay, come in.

Enter MARY BEATON and PARIS

MARY BEATON

Here waits my lord of Bothwell's messenger
To bear your word back of Lord Huntley's mind.

QUEEN

Ay, that I found it trustless. Tell my lord
He makes me mad to put his faith in him
And to mistrust that which is wholly his,
Even her true heart to whom he should have sent
Word every day what she should do for him,
And hath done nothing of it. I did say
He should take heed of that false brother-in-law,
Of whom his negligence and heedless faith
Have put us in the danger ; on my part
There has lacked nothing toward the work in hand,
And had he not more changed his mind than I

Since I went from him, he should need not now
By stranger's lips inquire of my resolve.
Say how you see me, and till he send me word
That I will here lie sick, as God he knows
What health I have at heart ; would I were dead,
For all I see goes ill ; but tell your lord
This was not in his promise that I find,
Nor no such matter ; but he lets me see
What power has absence on him, to whose bow
His hand has yet another string than mine.
And look you warn him of this brother-in-law
That he hath babbled of our enterprise
Wherein he puts but forth a heartless hand,
And in what great men's ears he well may guess
Who knows which most are dangerous ; yet me-
thinks

If still we have need to flatter them, so much
Might naturally be pleaded on his part,
That his good service and long amity
Might well deserve his pardon and their love
If past a subject's duty he put forth,
Not to constrain me but assure himself
Of such place nigh me that no foreign tongue
May by strange counsel hinder my consent
To that whereto he trusts his service shall
Make him one day to attain ; with such excuse
Shall he persuade them that he stands compelled
To make pursuit against his enemies :
And he may find fair words at will to say
To Maitland most of all, through whose keen tongue
We hold the rest by the ear ; but if at last
The deed of our device mislike him now,
Let him send word and leave not on my head
The blame of all ; and if it like him yet,

Say I beseech him for the honour of God
To come with no less force accompanied
Than of three hundred men ; rather with more,
For that is all the main part of my care ;
Seeing as for Huntley, I assure myself
He in our play shall henceforth bear no part
But of an honest and a fearful man
Whose thought and all his toil of heart it is
To keep the load of treason from his name.
Therefore I would not have my lord in all
Trust or mistrust him, but be circumspect
And take more power unto him.

PARIS

So shall I say ;
Your highness hath no message more for me ?

QUEEN

God wot no time it is for us to change
Tokens and toys of love ; yet I would send
For very sorrow something but in sign
That of my heart's grief I accuse not him
For his cold writing or forgetfulness,
His little memory of me and little care,
And least of all his promise-breach, being now
So far made his that what thing pleases him
Is acceptable to me, and all my thoughts
To his so willingly subdued, that all
That comes of him proceeds of no such root,
In mine esteem, as loveless negligence
Nor any love's lack, but such only cause
As I desire, being just and reasonable,
Which is the final order he should take

For his own surety and honour, who alone
Is my life's stay for which I only will
Preserve it, and without which in this world
My soul desires not but a sudden death.
Bear therefore to him for testimony of me
How lowly I submit me to his law
In sign of homage this that I take off
Of my head's ornament, which is the chief
And guide of other members, as to say
How being possessed of that as of a spoil
Which is the principal he needs must have
The remnant subject to him with heart's consent.
And for that heart, that seeing I have left it him
Long since I have not now in hand to give,
This stone instead I send him, painted black
And sown with tears and bones, a sepulchre
Whereto my heart is likened, being as it
Carved like a tomb or certain receptacle
To harbour his commandments in, and hold
More fast than all his memory and his name
Therein enclosed as in the ring my hair,
To come forth never till the grant of death
Shall let him rear a trophy of my bones,
As is the ring full of them, set therein
For sign he has made full conquest of my heart,
That even the bones must be to him bequeathed
For memory of his victory and my loss
That was so sweet to me: tell him but this,
And say that by the enamelling of black
He shall discern her steadfastness who sends,
And by the tears my fears innumerable
Lest I displease him, and those tears I shed
For his dear absence and for heart's disdain
That I may not in outward shape be his

As with full strength and heart and spirit I am,
And with good cause ; for were my merit more
Than hers of all born ever for men's love
Found worthiest and most perfect, and as much
As I desire it might be in his eye,
Well might I so rest ever, and shall strive
Still to maintain me in his government
As worthily as I may. Say, I beseech him
That is mine only good, in as good part
To take it at my hand as I at his
With extreme joy received our marriage bond,
That till the marriage of our bodies be
Made publicly shall part not from my breast,
Which keeps it now in sign of all the bliss
I can or hope for or desire on earth :
And that my letter here brake off for dread
Lest this as much should weary him to read
As I took joy to write it ; therefore, say,
Here did I set a kiss as on his hand
With such devotion as I pray to God
To give him long and blessed life, and me
That only good of all which I desire
And only may pretend to in the world,
His love and his good favour who doth hold
Alone my life up ; and this trust I showed
To you in whom I know the trust he hath
As I shall for his sake whose wife I am,
His humble and obedient lawful wife,
To whom my heart and body are dedicate
And shall in no wise unto death be changed
Nor good nor evil make me go from it.
So tell him, and despatch. [Exit PARIS.

What said Lord Mar

Touching the child's charge to you ?

MARY BEATON

But thus much ;
That he would never let it from his hand
Save with assent of the three several states,
And on condition there shall be proclaimed
Some honest lord and worthy such a charge
As captain of the castle of Edinburgh,
Where only may the prince, he says, lie safe
From them that slew his father.

QUEEN

Ay, so brave ?
There speaks a man of trust, found honourable ;
I had as lief be dead as see such men
Stand so at point to thwart me : by my life,
I hold it not a straw's worth in the scale
If I must live so shackled. What, and now,
When my life trembles on the top of fate,
And all my days hang from this edge of time
'Twixt night and light suspended, whence one hour
May hurl all hopes down breathless to the pit
And cast me broken at the mountain's foot
Or set me sure and steadfast in the sun,
To be so crossed of cozening honesties,
And honours made of craft, and fraudulent faith,
Would spur a blood more sluggish than my sleep
And prick a drowsier passion. Well, let be ;
Our time will come to take all these in hand.
What may doubt deem then I would do with him
That am his mother ? Nay, I know their thought ;
It is their fear and hatred of my lord
That glares askant on me ; and the child's self,
I think, as little loves me as he need,

Knowing in what love I held his father. Come,
I will yet see, before I take my leave,
If there be such a nature in our blood
As can command and change the spiritual springs
And motions of our thought, advance or check
The pulse of purpose in the soul that moves
Our longings and our loathings to their end
By mere control and force unreasonable
Of motiveless compulsion ; if such blind
And sensual chances of the stirring veins
That feed the heart of child or mother may
Divert and dull the mind's design, or turn
The conscience and the current of the will
From its full course and action. I believe,
Albeit I would not hurt the life I bare
Nor shed its blood, it is not possible
Such love should live between my child and me
Who know what source he came of more than mine,
And how that part of me once mixed therewith
Was sullied thence and shamed in mine own sight,
That loathes to look upon it, yet must see
In flesh and blood the record writ and sealed
As oft as I behold him : and you saw
He would not lie within mine arm, nor kiss,
But like a fox-cub scratched and strove, to be
Free of my hands again.

MARY BEATON

I see no need
In heaven or earth why you should love him.

QUEEN

No ?

They say such law there is to enforce such love

On either part ; I know not : but I think
Love should but flower from seed of love, and this
Was but a tare sown timeless and in hate ;
Yet so much am I mother in my mind
That, be it for love or loathing, from my heart,
When I perforce commend him to that care
Which will not yield him naturally to mine,
Fain would I parting know if soon or late
Mine eyes shall turn upon that face again
Which out of me was moulded, and take note,
When each on each looks equal-eyed, and sees
His crown a shadow that makes mine a shade,
What king must this be and what queen shall I.

SCENE VIII. *Dunbar. A Room in the Castle*

MAITLAND *and* SIR JAMES MELVILLE

MELVILLE

What, have you seen them since we came from horse ?
How looks she now ?

MAITLAND

Disquieted and strange ;
And he so hot and high of mood, I think
We have no safeguard from him but in her ;
And Huntley that at Stirling spake with me
Of this their counsel, and must now suspect
It was by me discovered to the lords,
Will turn perforce his fear of Bothwell's wrath
Into a sword to strike as straight as he
Even at my life, it may be ; which her grace

Shall easilier from fear of them redeem
Than her own fame from evidence of men,
That seeing her prisoner see too if she came
By force or no, and led by heart or hand,
To bonds indeed or freedom.

MELVILLE

Nay, myself
Was warned of him that rode in charge of me,
The Laird here of Blackadder, how his lord
Was of our lady's counsel ; and but now
As they rode in I heard him swear, and laugh,
Who would soe'er or would not, in their spite,
Yea, though herself she would not with her will,
Yet should the queen perforce now wed with him.

MAITLAND

The deed has flushed his brain and blood like wine ;
He is wroth and merry at once, as a man mad.
There will no good come of it.

MELVILLE

Surely, sir,
Of such loose crafts there cannot : all this land
Will cry more loud upon her than on him
If she be known consenting.

MAITLAND

If she be !
How shall not all ears know it on earth that hear ?
But two miles out of Edinburgh at noon,

Accompanied of all her guard and us,
She, meeting in mid road at Almond Bridge
The unthought-on Bothwell at his horsetroop's head,
Who with twelve men lays hand upon her rein,
Yields herself to him for fear our blood be spilt,
Or theirs or ours, for tenderness of heart
Submits her to his violent masterdom,
Forbids our swords, ties up all hands with words,
And doglike follows hither at his hand
For pure surprise and suddenness of fear
That plucks the heart out of resistance ; then,
Riding beneath the south wall of the town,
On show of summons to the castle sent
For help of us enforced thus of our foes,
We get but fire of guns charged full of sound
With hay stuffed in for powder ; and God knows
Balfour knew naught of this, the governor,
Who was forewarned not first of their design,
How by no means to cross but further it
With forecast of his office ; nay, all this
Was undevise'd and on the sudden wrought
To take her by swift stroke of simple hand ;
And so astonied were we all, and so
The castellan, and most of all the queen.
Why, though the world be drunk with faith in lies
Shall God make this too gospel ? From this day
Shall she begin her ruin ; with rent heart
I see the ways wherethrough her life shall lie,
And to what end ; for never henceforth more
Shall she get good or comfort of men's love,
Nor power nor honour that a queen should have,
Nor hap nor hope renewed in all her days.
She has killed herself to take her kingdom off
And give into strange keeping.

Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and HUNTLEY

BOTHWELL

Here he stands ;
This was the knave that was to baffle me ;
He shall die here.

HUNTLEY

I will not lose the part
My sword should have in him : this hour and hand
Shall cut off craft and danger. Stand, and die.

MAITLAND

Is it the queen's will that pursues my life ?
Then let it strike, and end.

QUEEN

I charge you, hold ;
I will not foully twice be forced of men
To stand and stain mine eyes with sight of blood
Shed of a friend, and guiltless. Hold, I say.

BOTHWELL

Stand by, for I will slay him.

QUEEN

Slay me then,
For I will fling my body on their points
Before your swords shall find him ; hark you, sir,
[To HUNTLEY.

SCENE IX. *The same*

*The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and the ARCHBISHOP of
ST. ANDREW'S*

QUEEN

What counsel, father ? if their league be made
So soon and strong at Stirling, we had need
Surely by this be fast in Edinburgh ;
We have sent thither freely as our friends
Lord Huntley and James Melville, who were here
As in our ward, not prisoners ; every day
Here lingering makes our enemies bitterer-tongued
And our strange state more hazardous ; myself
More taxed for willing bondage, or my lord
For violence done upon me.

ARCHBISHOP

In my mind,
There is no mean of policy now but speed
Nor surety but short counsel and stout heart.
The lords at Stirling, while you put off time,
Athol and Mar, and Morton with Argyle,
Are sworn to crown the prince, and of his name
Make to their cause a standard, if you cleave
Still to my lord here, from whose violent hand
With your own leave they fain would pluck you forth
And keep your honour hurtless ; but they see
You will have no deliverance at their hands
From him who, as they say, doth boast himself.
If he may get your child once in his ward,
To warrant him for ever in good time

From all revenging of his father's death.
Nay, it is bruited of them all about
How you at parting would have given the boy
An apple poisoned, which he put away,
And dogs that ate it after swelled and died.

BOTHWELL

The devil is in their lips ; had I free way,
Fire should seal up and sear them.

ARCHBISHOP

So they talk ;

The very children's tongues are hot on you,
And in their plays your shadowy action staged
And phantoms raised of your presented deed ;
Boys that in Stirling streets had made their game
To act again the slaying of Darnley, so
Were rapt with passion of the pastime feigned
They wellnigh slew the player that took on him
Your part, my lord, as murderer, and came off
Half hanged indeed and breathless ; this I hear,
And more much weightier daily from that part
Pointing the same way on you ; sure it is,
From France and England messengers desire
To have the prince delivered to their charge
As to be fostered for his surety's sake
Of one or other, safelier so bestowed
In foreign harbourage of a stranger court
Than at the rough breast of his natural land ;
Such offer comes there of Elizabeth
To those unquiet lords, but other aid
They must of her not look for to their part

Who stand against their sovereign. Now, since these
Are dangers evident, and every day
Puts more in them of dangerous, best it were,
I think, to meet them warlike point to point,
Your hands and powers made one, and multiplied
By mutual force and faith ; or you must part
And each lose other, and yet be neither saved,
Or presently with one sole face confront
The many-mouthed new menace of the time,
With divers heads deformed of enmities
That roar and ravin in the night of state
Made dim with factions ; only majesty
With light of bared and kindled brows and eyes
Can face them to consume ; do you but show
Your soul as high as is your crown, and power
As plain as is your cause, you shall enforce
By resolution and a forthright will
The obedience and the allowance of these men
That would constrain you by the fear of them
Within the limit of their leave. I say,
Proclaim at once the fore-ordained divorce
Between his sometime lady and my lord
And hard thereon your marriage, as compelled
By perilous instance of necessity
At once to assure you of a husband's help
And present strength in this your need, who stand
Fenceless and forceless with no man for stay,
And could desire none truer and worthier trust
Than him whose service done and valiant name
May warrant your remission of such fault
As men lay on him for the seeming force
With which unwillingly he stood constrained
To save you even for love's sake from their hands
Whence had not he redeemed you as by might

They had done you worse wrong than he seemed
to do.

This shall excuse the speed that you put on
And leave their hands no time to rise that would
Prevent you, being unmarried ; and your own,
Forestalling them, shall take again and steer
The helm of this land's general weal, else left
To their cross guidance and false pilotage.

BOTHWELL

By God, well said and counselled.

QUEEN

All is well,
Or shall, if but one thing be ; and in you
That lies alone of all men. Nay, you know it ;
Wrong me not now to ask.

BOTHWELL

Wrong you not me,
To cross my wit with riddles, which you know
From no man's lips I love.

QUEEN

I know not yet
If there be nought on any lips that live
Save mine that you love better : I can tell
Too little of your likings.

BOTHWELL

Be not wroth
That thus much of them I desire you learn,

And set your heart to it, once being schooled—fair
queen,

These are no chambering times, nor sit we here
To sing love's catches counter-changed with words
That cross and break in kisses : what you will,
Be swift to speak, or silent.

QUEEN

What I will?

I will be sure there hangs about your heart
No thought that bound it once to one cut off
And yet may feed it with desire to share
What is my treasure and my right to have
With her most undeserving ; which in you
Were more than Jason's falsehood was, that gave
To his new wife such vantage of his old
As you give her of me, whose narrower heart
Holds not a third part of the faith and love
That my obedience bears you, though she wear
Against my will such vantage in your sight,
By my hard hap ; yet would I think not so,
Nor liken you to such a trustless man
And miserable as he was, nor myself
To one so wronged a woman, and being wronged
In suffering so unpitiful as she.
Yet you put in me somewhat of her kind
That makes me like unto her in anything
That touches you or may preserve you mine
To whom alone you appertain, if that
May be called mine by right appropriated
Which should be won through faithful travail, yea,
Through only loving of you as God knows
I do and shall do all my days of life

For pain or evil that can come thereof :
In recompense of which and all those ills
You have been cause of to me, and must think
That I esteem no evils for your sake,
Let not this woman with her heartless tears
Nor piteous passion thrust me out of door
Who should sit sole and secret in your heart.
What hath she borne or I not borne for you,
And would not bear again? or by what gift
Have I set store or spared it that might go
To buy your heart's love to me? have I found
Empire or love of friends or pride or peace
Or honour or safe life or innocence
Too good things to put from me, or men's wrath,
Terror or shame or hatred of mine own,
Or breach of friends, or kingdom's wreck, or sin,
Too fearful things to embrace and make them mine
With as good will and joyous height of heart
As hers who takes love in her prosperous arms
And has delight to bridegroom? Have I not
Loved all these for your sake, and those good things,
Have I not all abhorred them? Would I keep
One comfort or one harbour or one hope,
One ransom, one resource, one resting-place,
That might divide me from your danger, save
This head whose crown is humbled at your foot
From storm that smote on yours? Would I sleep
warm
Out of the wind's way when your sail was set
By night against the sea-breach? Would I wait
As might your wife to hear of you, how went
The day that saw your battle, and hold off
Till the cry came of fallen or conquering men
To bid me mourn or triumph? Hath my heart

Place for one good thought bred not of your good
Or ill thought not depending on your ill?
What hath she done that yours hath place for her
Or time or thought or pity?

BOTHWELL

What have I,
That yours should fix on her untimely? Nay,
Last year she was my wife and moved you not,
And now she is turned forth naked of that name
And stripped as 'twere to clothe you, comes this heat,
And fear takes fire lest she turn back or I
To thrust you forth instead : you are fair and fool
Beyond all queens and women.

QUEEN

There spake truth,
For then you said, most loving. But indeed
This irks me yet, this galls with doubt and fear,
That even her plea to be divorced from you
On some forepast adulterous charge, which proved
She wins her asking, leaves your hand not loose
By law to wed again, but your same deed
Frees her from you and fetters you from me ;
Then stand we shamed and profitless ; meseems
God's very hand can loose not us and join,
Who binds and looses ; though Buccleuch make oath
She was contracted to you first, and this
No righteous marriage ; though she plight her soul
As she made proffer for our hope's sake ; yea,
Though you should bring a hundred loves to swear
They had the firstlings of your faith, who kept
No faith with any, nor will keep with me,

God knows, and I, that have no warrant yet
In my lord's word here which unweds you, being
Matched with your cousin in the fourth degree,
And no proof published if the Church's grace
Were granted for it, or sought ; no help of this,
If your love give not warrant ; and therein
If she hath half or I have less than all,
Then have I nothing of you. Speak to him ;
Bid him not break his faith, not this now mine ;
Plead for me with him, father, lest he lie
And I too lose him ; God shall pardon, say,
What sin we do for love, or what for wrath,
Or to defend us from the danger of men,
But to me, me, say, if he be forsworn,
That God shall not forgive it him nor I.

ARCHBISHOP

Be not too careful to confound yourself ;
These bonds are broken by God's leave and law ;
Make no fresh bonds of your own fears, to do
What harm these do no more ; he hath put her off :
Rest there content.

QUEEN

Nay, why should I then trust
He shall not put off me in heart for her ?

BOTHWELL

Why, have your choice then, and mistrust ; God's
death !
I had deemed I had learnt of women's witlessness
Some little learning, yet I thought no more
Than that it was but light as air, snow, foam,

And all things light, not lighter. I would know
What men hold foolish yet that hold you wise,
If not your fear.

QUEEN

Doth she not love you?

BOTHWELL

Ay.

QUEEN

Hath she not cause to hate, and doth not hate,
Who sues to be put from you, for your fault
Craves leave to be cut off, as I crave leave
To take you from her hands, her gift?

BOTHWELL

God knows ;

She may love, hate, or hate not neither love,
Or both alike ; I know not.

QUEEN

But I know

That you can love not. Nay, then help me, God !
If I did know this I would kill myself.
Yet to more proof I would I had put your heart
Ere I gave up to it all the might of mine—
Which is but feebleness. Well, we will go ;
There is no better counsel. Pardon me
If my fear seem to wrangle with my faith ;
They are parts but of my love, that with itself
Strives to be master of its grief and joy
Lest either overbear it, and therewith
Put out my life. Come ; all things shall be well.

SCENE X. *Holyrood*

Enter HERRIES and SIR JAMES MELVILLE

HERRIES

Is the work done?

MELVILLE

They are wedded fast ; and now
I think would one of them to free herself
Give the right hand she hath given him.

HERRIES

What, so soon?

Came she as loth into the council-hall
Or were her answers as compelled and strange?

MELVILLE

I have not seen for any chance till now
So changed a woman in the face as she,
Saving with extreme sickness. She was wed
In her old mourning habits, and her face
As deadly as were they ; the soft warm joy
That laughed in its fair feature, and put heart
In the eyes and gracious lips as to salute
All others' eyes with sweet regardfulness,
Looked as when winds have worn the white-rose
leaf ;
No fire between her eyelids, and no flower
In the April of her cheeks ; their spring acold,
And but for want of very heart to weep
They had been rainier than they were forlorn.

HERRIES

And his new grace of Orkney?

MELVILLE

The good duke
Was dumb while Adam Bothwell with grave lips
Set forth the scandal of his lewd life past
And fair faith of his present penitence,
Whose days to come being higher than his past place
Should expiate those gone by, and their good works
Atone those evil ; hardly twitched his eye
Or twinkled half his thick lip's curve of hair,
Listening ; but when the bishop made indeed
His large hard hand with hers so flowerlike fast,
He seemed as 'twere for pride and mighty heart
To swell and shine with passion, and his eye
To take into the fire of its red look
All dangers and all adverse things that might
Rise out of days unrisen, to burn them up
With its great heat of triumph ; and the hand
Fastening on hers so griped it that her lips
Trembled, and turned to catch the smile from his,
As though her spirit had put its own life off
And sense of joy or property of pain
To close with his alone ; but this twin smile
Was briefer than a flash or gust that strikes
And is not ; for the next word was not said
Ere her face waned again to winter-ward
As a moon smitten, and her answer came
As words from dead men wickedly wrung forth
By craft of wizards, forged and forceful breath
Which hangs on lips that loath it.

HERRIES

Will you think

This was not haply but for show, to wear
The likeness as of one not all constrained
Nor all consenting, willingly enforced
To do her will as of necessity?
That she might seem no part yet of his plot,
But as compelled by counsel of those lords
Who since her coming have subscribed by name
The paper of advice that in his cause
Declares what force of friends has Bothwell here
In Lothian and on all the border's march
To keep good order, and how well it were
She should for surety wed him whom she needs
Must wed for honour or perforce live shamed
By violence done upon her.

MELVILLE

No ; there hung

Too much of fear and passion on her face
To be put off when time shall be to unmask ;
The fire that moved her and the mounting will
While danger was and battle was to be,
Now she hath leapt into the pit alive
To win and wear the diamond, are no more ;
Hope feels the wounds upon its hands and feet
That clomb and clung, now halting since the hour
That should have crowned has bruised it. No, 'tis
truth ;
She is heart-struck now, and labours with herself,
As one that loves and trusts not but the man
Who makes so little of men's hate may make
Of women's love as little ; with this doubt

New-born within her, fears that slept awake,
And shame's eyes open that were shut for love,
To see on earth all pity hurt to death
By her own hand, and no man's face her friend
If his be none for whom she casts them off
And finds no strength against him in their hands.

HERRIES

Small strength indeed or help of craft or force
Must she now look for of them ; and shall find,
I fear, no stay against men's spirits and tongues
Nor shelter in the observance of their will
That she puts on, submitting her own faith
To the outward face of theirs, as in this act
Of marriage, and the judgment now enforced
Against the allowance of the mass, albeit
With a bruised heart and loathing did she bow
That royal head and hand imperious once
To give so much of her soul's trust away ;
And little shall it stead her.

MELVILLE

So fear I ;
'Tis not the warrant of an act affirmed
Against the remnants of her faith, nor form
Of this strange wedlock, shall renew to her
Men's outworn love and service ; nay, and strife
Lies closer to her than fears from outward ; these
Whose swords and souls attend on her new lord,
Both now for fault of pay grown mutinous,
From flat revolt they hardly have redeemed

With the queen's jewels and that English gift
Of the gold font sent hither for the prince
That served him not for christening, melted now
To feed base hands with gold and stop loud throats,
Whose strength alone and clamour put such heart
In Bothwell that he swore to hang the man
Who would not speak their banns at first, and now
But utters them with lips that yet protest
Of innocent blood and of adulterous bonds
By force proclaimed, and fraudulent ; and this Craig
The townsmen love, and heed not that for craft
Each day will Bothwell hear men preach, and show
To them that speak all favour, and will sit
A guest at burghers' boards unsummoned ; yet
Men's hate more swells against him, to behold
How by the queen he rides unbonneted
And she rebukes his too much courtesy ;
So that their world within doors and without
Swells round them doubtfully toward storm, and sees
This hot-brained helmsman in his own conceit
Even here in port, who drifts indeed at sea.

HERRIES

Short time will wind this up : the secretary,
Whose blood the queen would see not shed of him,
Is slipped away for Stirling, there to join
With Lindsay and the lords ere this combined,
From whom I may not now divide myself,
On the child's party. Not a hand will stay
Nor heart upon this side ; the Hamiltons,
For their own ends that set this marriage on,
Will for those ends with no sad hearts behold
At others' hands her imminent overthrow.

MELVILLE

This was the archbishop's counsel, that annulled
Last year's true marriage to procure the queen's
And even therein betray her. God mend all !
But I misdoubt me lest the sun be set
That looked upon the last of her good days.

SCENE XI. *The same*

*The QUEEN and BOTHWELL ; MARY BEATON and
ARTHUR ERSKINE in attendance*

QUEEN

Are you yet wroth ?

BOTHWELL

Are you yet wise ? to know
If I be wroth should less import than this
Which I would fain find of you.

QUEEN

By my life,
I think I am but wise enough to know
That witless I was ever.

BOTHWELL

Ay, but most,
You mean, to wed me, that am graceless more
Than witless you that wedded, in men's eyes
Who justliest judge of either ; yet, by God,
Had I not grace enough to match with you,

A woman's tongue keen as her faith was light,
But faith so like the wind spake never yet
With tongue so like a sword's point.

QUEEN

No, my lord?

'Tis well that I should hear so first of you
Who best may know the truth of your worst word.

BOTHWELL

Is it no truth that men so speak, and you,
By speech or silence or by change of face,
By piteous eyes or angry, give them cause
To babble of your bonds? What grace you show
Toward others is as doubt and hate of me
In these our enemies' sight, who see it and swear
You are kept in ward here of my will, and made,
Out of no trust or love but force and fear,
Thrall to my hand. Why, being but two days wed,
Must there be cause between us of dispute
For such a thing as this man, in whose name
I am crossed and slighted of your wanton will?

QUEEN

If he be worth no more than you conceive,
What grace I do him can hurt you?

BOTHWELL

I conceive!

Why, what worth is he with you, that I should
Conceive the least thought of him? Were I hurt,
Assure yourself it would be to his death;
Lay that much to your heart.

QUEEN

My heart is killed.

I have not where to lay it.

BOTHWELL

Pray you, no tears ;
I have seen you weep when dead men were alive
That for your eye-drops wept their hearts' blood out ;
So will not I. You have done me foolish wrong
And haply cast your fame for food to hounds
Whose teeth will strip it hour by hour more bare
Whereon they have gnawed before.

QUEEN

What have I done ?

Speak.

BOTHWELL

Nay, I will, because you know not : hark,
You are even too simple and harmless ; being man's
wife,
Not now the first time, you should buy more wit
Though with less innocence ; you have given a gift,
Out of your maiden singleness of soul
And eye most witless of misconstruing eyes,
Where you should not : this is strange truth to you,
But truth, God help us ! that man's horse who was
Your husband, and whose chattels, place, and name
Lie in my hold I think now lawfully
Whence none is like to wring them, have you given
Out of my hand to one of whom fame saith
That by the witness of a northland witch

He when I die must wed you, and my life
Shall last not half a year ; for in your bed
Must lie two husbands after me, and you
Shall in your fifth lord's lifetime die by fire.
Now, being but third and least in worth of these,
I would not have you die so red a death,
But keep you from all fresh or fiercer heat
Than of my lips and arms ; for which things' sake
I am not blithe, so please you, to behold
How straight this lay lord abbot of Arbroath
Sits in your husband's saddle. Pardon me
That with my jealous knowledge I confound
Your virginal sweet ignorance of men's minds,
Ill thoughts and tongues unmannerly, that strike
At the pure heart which dreams not on such harm ;
It is my love and care of your life's peace
Makes me thus venturous to wage words with you,
And put such troublous things in your fair mind,
Whereof God wot you knew not : and to end,
Take this much of me ; live what life you may
Or die what death, while I have part in you,
None shall have part with me ; nor touch nor word
Nor eye nor hand nor writing nor one thought
The lightest that may hang upon a look
Shall man get of you that I know not of
And answer not upon him. Be you sure
I am not of such fool's mould cast in flesh
As royal-blooded husbands ; being no king
Nor kin of kings, but one that keep unarmed
My head but with my hand, and have no wit
To twitch you strings and match you rhyme for rhyme
And turn and twitter on a tripping tongue,
But so much wit to make my word and sword
Keep time and rhyme together, say and slay.

Set this down in such record as you list,
But keep it surer than you keep your mind
If that be changing : for by heaven and hell
I swear to keep the word I give you fast
As faith can hold it, that who thwarts me here
Or comes across my will's way in my wife's,
Dies as a dog dies, doomless. Now, your pleasure ;
I prate no more.

QUEEN

Shall I be handled thus ?

BOTHWELL

You have too much been handled otherwise ;
Now will I keep you from men's hands in mine,
Or lack the use of these.

QUEEN

What, to strike me ?
You shall not need ; give me a knife to strike
That I may let my life out in his eye,
Or I will drown myself.

BOTHWELL

Why, choose again ;
I cross you not.

QUEEN

Give me a knife, I say.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

Make not our hearts bleed, madam, as they burn
To hear what we hear silent.

BOTHWELL

Comfort her ;
You were her chamber-knight on David's day.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

My lord, the reverence that the queen's sight bears
And awe toward her make me thus slow to set
My hand to do what work my heart bids ; else
I would not doubt to stand before your grace
And make such answer as her servant may.

QUEEN

Forbear him, Arthur ; nay, and me ; 'tis I
On whom all strokes first fall and sorest smite,
Who most of all am shieldless, without stay,
And look for no man's comfort. Pray you, sir,
If it be in your will that I cast off
This heavy life to lighten your life's load
That now with mine is laden, let me die
More queenlike than this dog's death you denounce
Against the man that falls into your hate :
Though not for love, yet shame, because I was
A queen that loved you : else you should not seem
So royal in her sight whose eyes you serve,
Nor she when I am dead with such high heart
Behold you, nor with such glad lips commend
As conqueror of me slain for her love's sake

And servant of her living in your love.
Let me die therefore queenlike, and your sword
Strike where your tongue hath struck ; though not so
 deep,
It shall suffice to cleave my heart and end.

BOTHWELL

Hear you, my queen ; if we twain be one flesh,
I will not have this daintier part of it
Turn any timeless hand against itself
To hurt me, nor this fire which is your tongue
Shoot any flame on me ; no fuel am I
To burn and feed you ; not a spark you shed
Shall kindle me to ruin, but with my foot
Rather will I tread out the light that was
A firebrand for the death of many a man
To light the pile whereon they burnt alive.
What, have I taken it in my hand to scorch
And not to light me ? or hath it set fire
To so few lives already that who bears
Needs not to watch it warily and wake
When the night falls about him ? Nay, the man
Were twice the fool that these your dead men were,
Who seeing as I have seen and in his hand
Holding the fire I carry through the dark
To be the beacon of my travelling days
And shine upon them ended, should not walk
With feet and eyes both heedful at what hour
By what light's leading on what ground he goes,
And toward what end : be therefore you content
To keep your flame's heat for your enemies' bale,
And for your friend that large and liberal light
That gave itself too freely, shot too far,

Till it was closed as in a lantern up
To make my path plain to me ; which once lost,
The light goes out for ever.

QUEEN

Yea, I know ;

My life can be but light now to your life,
And of no service else ; or if none there,
Even as you say, must needs be quenched ; and would
The wind that now beats on it and the sea
Had quenched it ere your breath, and I gone out
With no man's blood behind me.

BOTHWELL

Come, be wise ;

Our sun is not yet sunken.

QUEEN

No, not yet ;

The sky must even wax redder than it is
When that shall sink ; darkness and smoke of hell,
Clouds that rain blood, and blast of winds that wreck,
Shall be about it setting.

BOTHWELL

What, your heart

Fails you now first that shrank not when a man's
Might well at need have failed him ?

QUEEN

Ay, and no ;

It is the heart that fired me fails my heart,

And as that bows beneath it so doth mine
Bend, and will break so surely.

BOTHWELL

Nay, not mine ;

There is not weight yet on our adverse part,
Fear not, to bend it.

QUEEN

Yet it fails me now.

I have leant too much my whole life's weight on it
With all my soul's strength, and beneath the fraught
I hear it split and sunder. Let me rest ;
I would fain sleep a space now. Who goes there ?

MARY BEATON

A suitor to behold your majesty.

QUEEN

I will not see him. Who should make suit to me ?
Who moves yet in this world so miserable
That I can comfort ? or what hand so weak
It should be now my suppliant, or uplift
In prayer for help's sake to lay hold on mine ?
What am I to give aid or alms, who have
Nor alms nor aid at hand of them to whom
I gave not some but all part of myself ?
I will not see him.

MARY BEATON

It is a woman.

QUEEN

Ay ?

But yet I think no queen ; and cannot be
But therefore happier and more strong than I.
Yet I will see what woman's face for grief
Comes to seek help at mine ; if she be mad,
Me may she teach to lose my wits and woes
And live more enviable than ye that yet
Have wit to know me wretched.

Enter JANE GORDON

Who is this ?

Are you my suitor ?

JANE GORDON

I am she that was
Countess of Bothwell ; now my name again
Is that my father gave me.

QUEEN

Ay, no more ;

You are daughter yet and sister to great earls,
And bear that honour blameless ; be it enough ;
And tell me wherefore by that name you come
And with what suit before me.

JANE GORDON

Even but this,

To look once on you and to bid farewell
Ere I fare forth from sight.

QUEEN

Farewell ; and yet
I know not who should in this world fare well.
Is the word said?

JANE GORDON

A little leave at last
I pray you give me : that I seek it not
For love or envy toward my sometime lord
Or heart toward you disloyal now my queen,
Let me not plead uncredited. I came
Surely with no good hope to no glad end,
But with no thought so vile of will as this,
To thrust between your hearts the care of me,
Claim right or challenge pity, melt or fret
Your eyes with forced compassion : I did think
To have kissed your hand and something said for
sign

I had come not of weak heart or evil will,
But in good faith, to see how strong in love
They stand whose joy makes joyless all my life,
Whose loving leaves it loveless, and their wealth
Feeds full upon my famine. Be not wroth ;
I speak not to rebuke you of my want
Or of my loss reprove you, that you take
My crown of love to gild your crown of gold ;
I know what right you have, and take no shame
To sit for your sake humbled, who being born
A poor mean woman would not less have been
By God's grace royal, and by visible seal
A natural queen of women ; but being crowned
You make the throne imperial, and your hand
Puts power into the sceptre ; yea, this head
Of its gold circlet takes not majesty,

But gives it of its own ; this may men see,
And I deny not ; nor is this but just,
That I, who have no such honour born or given,
Should have not either, if it please you not,
That which I thought I had ; the name I wore,
The hand scarce yet a year since laid in mine,
The eye that burned on mine as on a wife's,
The lip that swore me faith, the heart that held
No thought or throb wherein I had no part,
Or heaved but with a traitor's breath, and beat
With pulse but of a liar.

BOTHWELL

Ay, swore I so?
Why, this was truth last year then.

QUEEN

Truth, my lord?

What does the fire of such a word as this
Between such lips but burn them, as mine ears
Burn that must hear by your device and hers
With what strange flatteries on her prompted lips
This dame unwedded lifts her hand unringed
To abash me with its show of faith, and make
Your wife ashamed at sight of such a love
As yet she bears you that is not your wife ?

BOTHWELL

What devil should prick me to such empty proof
And pride unprofitable ? I pray you think
I am no such boy to boast of such a spoil
As chamberers make their brag of. Let her speak
And part not as unfriends.

QUEEN

Madam, and you
That thus renumber and resound his vows,
To what good end I know not, in our ear,
What would you have of him whom your own will
Rose up to plead against as false, to break
His bonds that irked you and unspeak the word
That held you hand in hand? Did you not pray
To be set free from bondage, and now turn
To question with the hand that you put off
If it did well to loose you?

JANE GORDON

Truly no ;
Nor will I question with your grace in this,
Whether by mine own will and uncompelled
I only would have put that hand away
That I will say would yet have held mine fast
But for my frowardness and rancorous mind ;
Let all this even be so ; as he shall say
Who will say nought but with your queenly will,
Why, so will I. Yet ere I am gone, my lord—
O, not my lord, but hers whose thrall am I—
My sometime friend and yet not enemy,
If this thing not offend you, that I crave
So much breath of you as may do me right,
I pray you witness for me how far forth
And for what love's sake I took part with you
Or gave consent to our devised divorce,
And if this were for hate ; for you should know
How much of old time I have hated you,
How bitter made my heart, what jealous edge

Set on mine envy toward you ; spare not then
To say if out of cold or cankered heart
I sought, or yielded shamefully for spite,
To be divided from you. Nay, forbear ;
Speak not, nor frown on me ; you cannot say
I was your loveless or disloyal wife,
Or in my void bed on disconsolate nights
Sought comfort but of tears : nor that I held
Mine honour hurt of that which bruised my heart,
And grudged to help you to mine own most wrong
And lend you mine own hand to smite myself
And make you by mine own mouth quit of me.
This that I did, and wherefore I did this,
And if for love's or hate's sake, verily
You shall not say you know not, and the queen
Shall blame me not to put you yet in mind,
Nor think it much that I make record here
Of this that was between us : wherefore now
I take no shame at this my leave-taking
To part as one that has not erred herein,
To love too little ; this shall not be said
When one bethinks him such a woman was,
That with poor spirit or with contracted heart
I gave myself to love you, or was found
Too mean of mind or sparing of my soul
To cast for love the crown of love away,
And when you bade refuse you for my lord,
Whom, had you bidden, with my whole heart's blood
I had thought not much to purchase for my love :
But seeing nor blood nor all my body's tears
Might buy you back to love me, I was fain
That you should take them and my very life
To buy new love and life with. Sir, and now
Ere we twain part——

QUEEN

What, are ye parted not?
Between his lover and my lord I stand
And see them weep and wrangle ere they part,
And hold my peace for pity!

JANE GORDON

God shall judge
If with pure heart and patience, or with soul
That burns and pines, I would have said farewell;
I crave but this much of your grace and God's,
Make me at last not angry.

QUEEN

Have you held
No counsel or communion with my lord
Since—I am shamed that take upon my lips
Such inquisition. If you have aught yet, speak;
I bid not nor forbid you.

JANE GORDON

Nought but this;
To unpledge my faith, unlight my love, and so
Set on his hand the seal by touch of mine
That sunders us.

QUEEN

You shall not take his hand.

JANE GORDON

I think not ever then to touch it more,
Nor now desire, who have seen with eyes more sad
More than I thought with sorrowing eyes to see
When I came hither ; so this long last time
Farewell, my lord ; and you, his queen, farewell.

[*Exit.*]

QUEEN

Hath she made end ? *While I have part in you,*
None shall have part with me ; was this my lord,
Was this not you that said so ?

BOTHWELL

Come, enough ;

I am bound not to be baited of your tongues.

QUEEN

Bid her come back.

BOTHWELL

What, are you foolish ? think

You twain shall look in either's eyes no more.

QUEEN

Why should I look in yours to find her there ?
For there she sits as in a mirror shown
By the love's light enkindled from your heart,
That flashed but on me like a fen-fire lit
To lure me to my grave's edge, whence I fall
Deep as the pit of hell ; but yet for shame
Deny not her to me as me to her,

Me that have known this ever, but lacked heart
To put the thing to use I knew ; and now
For both our sakes who have loved you, play not
false

But with one love at once ; take up your love
And wear it as a garland in men's sight,
For it becomes you ; if you love me not,
You have lied by this enough ; speak truth, shake
hands,
Loose hearts and leave me.

BOTHWELL

Vex not me too long,
Vexing your own heart thus with vanity ;
Take up your wisdom that you have at will,
And wear it as a sword in danger's sight
That now looks hard upon us. Mine you are,
Love me or love not, trust me not or trust,
As yours am I ; and even as I in you,
Have faith in me, no less nor further ; then
We shall have trust enough on either part
To build a wall about us at whose foot
That sea of iron swayed by winds of war
Shall break in foam like blood ; and hurled once
back,
The hearts and swords of all our enemies fallen
Lie where they fell for ever. Know but this,
And care not what is unknown else ; we twain
Have wrought not out this fortune that we have
Nor made us way to such an hour and power
To let men take and break it, while as fools
We kiss and brawl and cry and kiss again,
And wot not when they smite. For these next days,

We will behold the triumph held at Leith
And pageant of a sea-fight as set forth
With open face and spirit of joyousness
To fix this faith in all men's eyes and minds,
That while life lives we stand indissoluble :
Then shall you send out for your child again
Forth of Lord Mar's good keeping, that your heart
May here have comfort in his present sight ;
So shall all these who make his name their sword
Lie weaponless within our hand and hold,
Who are drawn in one against us, or prepare,
While we delay, for Stirling ; where by this,
I am certified on faith of trusty men,
Argyle is met with Morton, our good friends
That served us for their turn, with some that helped
To make our match and some that would have
 marred,

Once several-souled, now in their envies one,
As Lindsay, Athol, Herries ; and to these
Maitland is fled, your friend that must not bleed,
Your counsellor is stolen away and lives
To whet his wit against you ; but myself,
When we have shown us to the people, and seen
What eye they turn upon our marriage feast,
Will ride to Melrose, and raise up from sleep
Their hardy hearts whom now mine unfriends there
Hold in subjection ; Herries nor Lord Hume
Nor Maxwell shall have power to tie them up
When I shall bid them forth, and all the march
Shall rise beneath us as with swell o' the sea
And wash of thickening waters when the wind
Makes the sea's heart leap with such might of joy
As hurls its waves together ; there shall we
Ride on their backs as warriors, and our ship

Dance high toward harbour. Put but on the spirit
You had in all times that beset your peace,
Since you came home, with danger ; in those wars
That made the first years clamorous of your reign,
And in this past and perilous year of ours
Where you lacked never heart. Be seen again
The royal thing men saw you ; these your friends
Shall look more friendly on our wedded faith
Seeing no more discord of our days to be,
And our bold borderers with one heart on fire
Burn in your warlike safeguard, once to strike
And end all enemies' quarrel. When we part,
At Borthwick Castle shall you look for me,
Where I will gather friends more fain of fight
Than all our foes may muster.

QUEEN

Sir, so be it ;

But now my heart is lower than once it was,
And will not sit I think again so high
Though my days turn more prosperous than I deem.
But let that be. Come, friends, and look not sad
Though I look sadder ; make what cheer we may,
For festival or fight, or shine or shower,
I will not fail you yet. God give me heart,
That never so much lacked it ; yea, he shall,
Or I will make it out of mine own fears
And with my feebleness increase my force
And build my hope the higher that joy lies low
Till all be lost and won. Lead you, my lord,
And fear not but I follow ; I have wept
When I should laugh, and laughed when I should
weep,

And now live humbler than I thought to be ;
I ask not of your love, but of mine own
I have yet left to give. Come, we will see
These pageants or these enemies ; my heart
Shall look alike on either. Be not wroth ;
I will be merry while I live, and die
When I have leave. My spirit is sick ; would God
We were now met at Borthwick, with men's spears
And noise of friends about us ; friend or foe,
I care not whether ; here I am sore at heart,
As one that cannot wholly wake nor sleep
Till death receive or life reprieve me. Come ;
We should be glad now ; let the world take note
We are glad in spite and sight of enmities
That are but worth the hour they take to quell.

SCENE XII. *Stirling Castle*

MAITLAND *and* LINDSAY

LINDSAY

Is there such breach between them ? why, men said,
When they would ride through Edinburgh and he
Bare-headed at her bridle, she would take
By force and thrust his cap upon his head
With loving might and laughing ; and at Leith
They saw the false fight on the waters join
And mid-May pageants that shone down the sun,
As with glad eyes of lovers newly wed
Whose hearts were of the revel ; and so soon
Are hearts and eyes divided ?

MAITLAND

Not an hour
May she draw breath but in his eye, nor see
But whom he shall give entrance : in her sight
He thought to have slain me, but she came between
And set for shield her bosom to his sword
In her own chamber ; so each day and night
By violent act or viler word than deed
He turns her eyes to water-springs of tears,
Who leaves not yet to love him ; such strong hold
By flesh or spirit or either made one fire
Hath such men's love on women made as she,
For no foul speech I think nor strokes nor shame
Would she go from him, but to keep him fast
Would burn the world with fire ; and no force less
Shall burn their bonds in sunder.

LINDSAY

We will bring
And kindle it in their sight. They are southward fled
To meet at Borthwick ; thither we design,
To raise the Merse with Hume, and with Lord Mar
And with the Douglas' following bind them round
And take them in one snare, whence one of these
Shall creep not forth with life or limb that feels
No hound's fang fasten on it ; and his mate
Shall see their feet smoke with his slaughtered blood.

SCENE XIII. *Borthwick Castle*

The QUEEN and BOTHWELL ; MARY BEATON in attendance

QUEEN

You should be hence again ; since you came in
From Melrose with no levies at your back,
We have heard no news of friends, and hear but now
That we are ringed with Morton's folk about ;
How shall he not have laid unhappy hand
Upon your messenger that bare our word
Of summons to the archbishop and your friend
Balfour to be with Huntley at our side ?

BOTHWELL

Ay, he is trapped that bore my letters hence,
I doubt not ; none have feet to run aright,
Eyes to see true, hands to bring help, but they
That move them to our ruin. This Balfour,
Whom I laid trust on since our fiery night
As on a true man bound of force to me,
Has fallen in conference and device of plots,
I hear, with that lean limb of policy
That loves me not, James Melville, by whose mouth
Being warned I meant to take out of his hand
The castle-keys of Edinburgh and give
To one my closer kinsman for more trust,
He has made him friends of ancient foes, and seeks,
By no less service than pursuit of them
Who slew the king your husband, to deserve

Their favour who are risen of honest heart
But to chastise these slayers, of whom God wot
Themselves were none, nor he that hunts with them
Upon the trail of treason. O, your lords
Are worthy friends and enemies, and their tongues
As trusty as their hands are innocent,
When they see time to turn.

QUEEN

I would their lives
Lay all between my lips, and with one breath
I might cut all theirs off ! nor tongue nor hand
Should rise of them against us, to deny
Their work disclaimed when done. What slaves are
these
That make their hands red with men's secret blood
And with their tongues would lick them white, and
wash
The sanguine grain out with false froth of words
From lying lips that kissed the dead to death
And now cry vengeance for him ? But, my lord,
Make you haste hence to-night ere they be here
That if we tarry will beset us ; I
Should hang but as a fetter on your foot,
Which should pass free forth to Dunbar, and raise
With sound even of its tread and forward speed
The force of all the border.

BOTHWELL

Where I go,
There shall you not be far to find ; to-night
I will sleep here.

QUEEN

God give you rest and strength,
To make that heart which is the lord of mine
Fresh as the spirit of sunrise ! for last night
You slept not well.

BOTHWELL

No ; I had dreams, that am
No natural dreamer ; I will sleep apart,
With Cranston's son to lie at hand, or wait
If I lack service.

QUEEN

Nay, let me be there ;
I will not weary you with speech, nor break
Your sleep with servile and officious watch,
But sit and keep it as a jewel is kept
That is more dear than eyesight to its lord,
Or as mine eyes can keep not now their own,
Now slumber sits far from them. Let me wake.

BOTHWELL

No, not with me.

QUEEN

What, lest I trouble you ?
Should my being there put dreams in you again,
To cross your sleep with me ?

BOTHWELL

Belike it might.

QUEEN

Nay, I was no part of your dreams, I think ;
You dream not on me waking nor asleep,
But if you dream on no face else nor mine,
I will be yet content.

BOTHWELL

Well, so it was,
I dreamt at once of either ; yet I know not
Why I should tell my dream ; your lord that was,
They say, would prattle of his fears by night
And faces of false peril ; I was never
So loth by day to face what fear I might
As to be sick in darkness ; but this dream
I would not see again. Yet was it nought ;
I seemed to stand between two gulfs of sea
On a dark strait of rock, and at my foot
The ship that bore me broken ; and there came
Out of the waves' breach crying of broken men
And sound of splintering planks, and all the hull
Shattered and strewn in pieces ; and my head
Was as my feet and hands, bare, and the storm
Blew hard with all its heart upon me ; then
Came you, a face with weeping eyes, and hair
Half glimmering with a broken crown that shone
Red as of molten iron ; but your limbs
Were swathed about and shrouded out of sight,
Or shown but as things shapeless that the bier
Shows ready for the grave ; only the head
Floated, with eyes fast on me, and beneath
A bloodlike thread dividing the bare throat
As with a needle's breadth, but all below

Was muffled as with cerecloths ; and the eyes
Wept ; then came one we wot of clad in black
And smiling, and laid hands on me more cold
Than is a snake's kiss or the grave's, and thrust
Between that severed head, weeping and crowned,
That mourned upon me, and mine eyes that watched,
Her own strange head wrapped widow-like and wan
In habit of one sorrowing, but with lips
That laughed to kiss me ; and therewith at once
Your face as water flowed out of my sight,
And on mine own I felt as drops of blood
Falling, but if your tears they were or hers
Or either's blood I knew not ; on mine eyes
The great dead night shut doorwise like a wall,
And in mine ears there sprang a noise of chains
And teeth ground hard of prison-grates that jarred
And split as 'twere with sound my heart, which was
As ice that cleaves in sunder : for there came
Through that black breathless air an iron note
Of locks that shut and sounded, and being dumb
There left me quick entombed in stone, and hid
Too deep for the day's eyeshot ; then I woke
With the sea's roaring and the wind's by night
Fresh in my sense, and on my travailing heart
A weight of walls and floors and upper earth
That held me down below the breach o' the sea
Where its tide's wash kept witness overhead
How went the scornful days and nights above
Where men forgot me and the living sun
As a dead dog passed over.

QUEEN

What, alone?
She went not with you living underground

To sit in chains and hear the sea break? nay,
She would not cast you off. This was your love,
Your love of her and need of her sweet sight,
That brought her so upon your sleep, and made
Your sense so fearful of all things but this,
And all else heard and seen so terrible
But her face only : she should comfort you,
Whom I should bring to wreck ; why, so she said,
Saying how she had loved you whom I loved not ;
yea,

Her eyes were sad, she said, that saw forsooth
So little love between us : this sweet word,
This word of hers at parting, this it was
Of which your dream was fashioned, to give sign
How firm she sits and fast yet in your heart,
Where I was never.

BOTHWELL

Well, how be it soe'er,
I would not dream again this dead dream out
For less than kingly waking : so good night,
For I will sleep alone.

QUEEN

No, with my heart,
That lies down with you though it sleeps not. Go,
And dream of no less loving prayer than mine
That calls on God for sleep to comfort you
And keep your heart from sense of aught more hard
Than her great love who made it. [*Exit BOTHWELL.*

'Tis a night
That puts our France into my mind ; even here
By those warm stars a man might call it June,

Were such nights many : their same flower-bright
eyes

Look not more fair on Paris, that mine own
Again shall hardly look on. Is it not strange
That in this grey land and these grievous hours
I should so find my spirit and soul transformed
And fallen in love with pain, my heart that was
Changed and made humble to his loveless words
And force as of a master ? By my faith,
That was till now fixed never and made as fire
To stand a sunlike star in love's live heaven—
A heaven found one in hue and heat with hell—
I had rather be mishandled as I am
Of this first man that ever bound me fast
Than worshipped through the world with breaking
hearts

That gave their blood for worship. I am glad
He sometime should misuse me ; else I think
I had not known if I could love or no.
If you could love man with my heart as now,
You would not mock nor marvel.

MARY BEATON

No, not then.

QUEEN

It is not in your heart : there lies not power
In you to be for evil end or good
The strange thing that is I.

MARY BEATON

There does not, no,
Nor can lie ever : could I love at all,

It were but as mean women, meanly ; so
I do the best to love not.

QUEEN

Hark ! what noise ?

Look forth and see.

MARY BEATON

A sound of men and steeds ;
The ring is round us ; hark, the cry of Hume,
There Lindsay, and there Mar.

QUEEN

Call up my lord :

I will not go to vex him ; but do you

Haste and awake them. [*Exit* MARY BEATON.

Be it not in mine eyes

That he first sees death risen upon his sleep,
If we must die ; being started out of rest,
If he should curse me, were my heart not slain
With the opening of his eyes in wrath on mine ?

Re-enter MARY BEATON

MARY BEATON

My lord is raised and fled ; but in the press
The lord of Cranston's son that slept with him
Is fallen by flight into the enemy's hands,
Who cry out for him yet as hounds that quest,
And roar as on their quarry.

QUEEN

Fled, and safe?

MARY BEATON

Ay, past their hands' reach that had rent him else;
Be sure he is forth, and free, or you should hear
More triumph in these cries.

QUEEN

God, thou art good!

Fling wide the window: I will know of them
If they be come to slay me.—What, my lords!
Are all these men of mine that throng by night
To make such show of service, and present
Strange offices of duty? Where are ye
That are chief ushers to their turbulent love
Who come thus riotously to proffer it?
Which is first here? a bold man should he be
That takes unbidden on him such desert—
Let me not say, a traitor.

LINDSAY (*without*)

Where is he,
The traitor that we seek? for here is none
But in your bosom.

QUEEN

Here then ends your search,
For here am I; and traitors near enough
I see to pierce the bosom that they seek,
Where never shall be treason till its blood
Be spilt by hands of traitors that till now
Durst never rise so near it.

LINDSAY

Give him forth,
Or we will have these walls down.

QUEEN

What, with words?
Is there such blast of trumpets in your breath
As shook the towers down of the foes of God
At the seventh sounding? yet we stand and laugh
That hear such brave breath blown and stormlike
speech
Fly round our ears: is it because your war,
My lords, is waged with women, that ye make
Such woman's war on us?

MAR (*without*)

Madam, we come
To take you from his hand that is your shame,
And on his shameful head revenge that blood
Which was shed guiltless; hither was he fled,
We know, into your shelter: yield him up,
Ere yet worse come than what hath worst come yet.

QUEEN

There is none here to die by you but I,
And none to mock you dying. Take all your
swords;
It is a woman that they came to slay,
And that contemns them; go not back for fear;
Pluck up your hearts; one valiant stroke or twain,
And ye are perfect of your work, and I

For ever quit of treason ; and I swear,
By God's and by his mother's name and mine,
Except ye slay me presently, to have
Such vengeance of you and my traitors all
As the loud world shall ring with ; so to-night
Be counselled, and prevent me, that am here
Yet in your hands ; if ye dare slay me not,
Ye are dead now here already in my doom :
Take heart, and live to mock it.

MAR

He is fled.

Here boots us not to tarry, nor change words
With her that hath such vantage as to know
We have missed our prize and purpose here, which
was
To take the traitor that is fled, and bring
Whither we now ride foiled, to Edinburgh,
Thence to return upon them.

LINDSAY

Hear yet once ;

You, madam, till our day be set of doom,
Look to the adulterer's head that hence is flown,
Whose shame should now stand redder in your face
Than blushes on his hand your husband's blood,
And cleave more fast ; for that dead lord's revenge
Will we make proclamation, and raise up
The streets and stones for vengeance of your town
That sits yet sullied with bloodguiltiness
Till judgment make it clean ; whose walls to-night
Myself for fault of better ere I sleep
Will scale though gates be fastened, and therein

Bring back and stablsh justice that shall be
A memory to the world and unborn men
Of murder and adultery.

QUEEN

Good my lord,
We thank you for the care you have and pains
To speak before you smite ; and that so long,
The deed can follow not on the swift word
For lack of spirit and breath to mate with it ;
So that they know who hear your threat betimes
What fear it bears and danger, and for fear
Take counsel to forestall it. Make good speed ;
For if your steed be shod but with fleet speech,
Ere you shall stride the wall of our good town
Its foot may trip upon a traitor's grave.

MARY BEATON

They ride fast yet ; hear you their starting cry ?

QUEEN

For each vile word and venomous breath of theirs
I will desire at my lord's hand a head
When he shall bring them bound before my foot.
If thou hast counsel in thee, serve me now :
I must be forth, and masked in such close wise
As may convey me secret to his side
Whence till our wars be done I will not part,
Nor then in peace for ever : in this shape
I should ride liable to all eyes and hands
That might waylay me flying ; but I will play
As in a masque for pastime, and put on

A horseboy's habit or some meaner man's
That wears but servant's steel upon his thigh
And on his sleeve the badge but of a groom,
And so pass noteless through toward Haddington
Whither my lord had mind to flee at need
And there expect me. Come ; the night wears out ;
The shifting wind is sharper than it was,
And the stars falter. Help me to put off
This outward coil of woman ; my heart beats
Fast as for fear a coward's might beat, for joy
That spurs it forth by night on warriors' ways
And stings it with sharp hope to find his face
That shall look loving on me, and with smiles
Mock the false form and cheer the constant heart
That for his love's sake would be man's indeed.

ACT IV

JOHN KNOX

TIME : JUNE 15 AND 16, 1567

SCENE I. *Carberry Hill**The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and Soldiers*

QUEEN

I would this field where fate and we must cross
 Were other than it is ; but for this thought,
 On what ill night some score of years ago
 Here lay our enemy's force before that fight
 Which made next day the face of Scotland red
 And trod her strength down under English feet,
 I would not shrink in this wide eye of dawn,
 In the fair front of such a summer's day,
 To meet the mailed face of my traitor's host
 And with bared brows outbrave it.

BOTHWELL

Keep that heart,
 For fear we need it ; look beyond the bridge
 There at this hill's foot on the western bank
 How strong they stand under the gathering light ;
 I have not seen a battle fairer set

Or in French fields or these our thirstier lands
That feed unslaked on blood.

QUEEN

They grow now green,
These hills and meadows that with slain men's lives
Have fed the flocks of war ; come ten years yet,
And though this day should drench them with more
death

Than that day's battle, not a stain shall stand
On their fresh face for witness. Had God pleased
To set a strong man armed with hands to fight
And on his head his heritage to keep,
Sworded and crowned a king, in my sad stead,
To fill the place I had not might to hold,
And for the child then bitterly brought forth
Unseasonable, that being but woman born
Broke with the news her father's heart, who died
Desperate in her of comfort, had he sent
The warrior that I would be, and in time
To look with awless eye on that day's fight
That reddened with the ruin of our hopes
The hour that rocked my cradle, who shall say
The scathe of Pinkie Cleugh and all that blood
Had made the memory so unfortunate
Of that which was my birth-time ? Being a man,
And timelier born to better hap than mine,
I might have set upon that iron day
Another mark than signs it in our sight
Red with reproach for ever.

BOTHWELL

Ay, my queen ?
These four nights gone you met me soldierlike

Escaped from Borthwick, whence I brought you in,
Three darkling hours past midnight, to Dunbar,
Where you put off that sheath of fighting man
For this poor woman's likeness yet you wear,
Wherein you rode with your six hundred men
To meet at Haddington but two days since
These sixteen hundred border folk I led
And pass with me to Seyton ; did you find
Your life more light in you or higher your heart
Inside that habit than this woman's coat
That sits so short upon you ?

QUEEN

By my life,
I had forgot by this to be ashamed
Of the strange shape I ride in, but your tongue
Smites my cheek red as is this scanted weed
Wherein I mask my queenship ; yet God knows
I had liefer ride thus forth toward such a day
Than hide my sick heart and its fears at home
In kinglier garments than this mask of mine,
Thus with my kirtle kilted to the knee
Like girls that ride in poor folks' ballads forth
For love's sake and for dangers' less than mine.
Yet had I rather as your henchman ride
At your right hand and hear your bridle ring
Than sit thus womanly to watch men strike.

BOTHWELL

There will be parleying first ; I have word of this,
That they set forth at heaviest of the night
From Edinburgh to cross our march betimes,
And by the French ambassador your friend

At Musselburgh were overtaken, whence
We look for news by him what hearts they bear,
What power and what intent ; he hath ta'en on him
To stand between our parts as mediator
And bear the burden of our doubtful peace ;
We must fight mouth to mouth ere hand to hand,
But the clean steel must end it.

QUEEN

Now would God

I had but one day's manhood, and might stand
As king in arms against this battle's breach
A twelve hours' soldier, and my life to come
Be bounded as a woman's ; all those days
That must die darkling should not yet put out
The fiery memory and the light of joy
That out of this had lightened, and its heat
Should burn in them for witness left behind
On those piled ashes of my latter life.
O God, for one good hour of man, and then
Sleep or a crown for ever !

BOTHWELL

By God's light,
The man that had no joy to strike for you
Were such a worm as God yet never made
For men to tread on Kiss me ; by your eyes
And fiery lips that make my heart's blood hot,
I swear to take this signet of your kiss
As far into the fight as man may bear,
And strike as two men in mine arm and stroke
Struck with one sense and spirit

QUEEN

If I might change

But this day with you in your stead to strike
And you look on me fighting, as for me
You have fought ere this last heat so many a prize,
Or for your own hand ere your own was mine,
I would pray God for nought again alive.
But since my heart can strike not in my hand,
Fight you for me ; put on my heart to yours,
And let the might of both enforce your arm
With more than its own manhood and that strength
Which is your natural glory.

BOTHWELL

Sweet, I think,

When we have rid through this day's wrath, if God
Shall give us peace and kingdom and long life
And make them fruitful to us, we shall bring forth
A brood of kings as lions. Now in brief
If this shall be or shall not may we know,
For look where yonder facing to the sun
Comes up to usward from the under field
One with a flag of message ; in mine eye
It is the Frenchman.

QUEEN

I will meet him here ;

Here will I sit upon this rock for throne
And give such audience as my fortune may ;
Either the last that shall salute me queen
Or first of my new reign, that from this day
Shall fearfully begin for them whose fear
Till now has held me shackled, and my will
Confined of theirs unqueenly.

BOTHWELL

I meantime

Will see our line in order ; for this truce
Must hold not long ; I would our hosts should meet
Before the heat strikes of the middle day
And this June sun drop on our soldiers' heads
Or shoot their eyes out. *[Exit.]*

QUEEN

If God give us peace !

Yet though he give and we twain see good days,
I would not lose for many fortunate years
And empire ringed with smooth security
The sharp and dangerous draught of this delight
That out of chance and peril and keen fear
Springs as the wine out of the trampled grape
To make this hour sweet to my lips, and bid
My dancing heart be like a wave in the sun
When the sea sways between the sun and wind
As my sense now between the fears and hopes
That die to-day for ever. O, this doubt
That is not helpless but has armour on
And hands to fight with, has more joy withal
And puts more spirit into the flesh of life,
More heart into the blood and light in the eyes,
Than the utter hour of triumph, and the fight
More than the prize is worth man's prizing ; yea,
For when all's won all's done, and nought to do
Is as a chain on him that with void hands
Sits pleasureless and painless. I had rather
Have looked on Actium with Mark Antony
Than bound him fast on Cydnus. O my hour,
Be good to me, as even for the doubt's sake

■

More than safe life I love thee ; yet would choose
Not now to know, though I might see the end,
If thou wilt be good to me ; do thy work,
Have thine own end ; and be thou bad or good,
Thou shalt nor smite nor crown a queen in heart
Found lesser than her fortune.

Enter DU CROC

Now, my lord,
What is their will who by such sovereign show
Should be my lords indeed ? if you that came
'Twixt crown and crown ambassador pass now
Between our camps on message : but this day
Shall leave in Scotland but one sovereignty
To see that sun sink.

DU CROC

Madam, from the lords
I come on errand but for love and fear
That move me toward your highness ; on whose part
I reasoning with them of their faith to you
And bond wherein their loyalties should live,
By counsel of the Laird of Lethington,
Was charged to bear you from them present word
For what they stand against your sight in arms,
And will not but by force of yours dissolve
Till it be granted.

QUEEN

Speak, my lord ; I know
Your heart is whole and noble as their faith
Is flawed and rotten ; no disloyal word
Shall make your tongue disloyal in mine ear,
Speaking for them.

DU CROC

This is their whole demand ;
That from the bloody hand which holds your own
You pluck it forth and cast him from your sight
To judgment who now stands through you secure
And makes his weapon of your wounded name
And of your shame his armour ; and to him
They offer fight with equal hand to hand
Of noble seconds in what sum he will
To match in blood and number with his own,
If so he list to meet their chosen of men
In personal battle, backed with less or more
Or singly sworded ; but this much they swear,
They had rather make their beds in the earth alive
Than yet sit still and let this evil be.
And on your own part I beseech your grace
Set not your heart against the hearts of these
Lest it be broken of them, but betimes
Call yet to mind what grief and shame will be
Among your friends in France and all our part
To see you so with this man's hap inwound
That in his fall you cast yourself away
And hand in hand run on with him to death.

QUEEN

They are all forsworn that seek his death ; all they
With these blown tongues now questing for his blood
By judgment set him free as innocence,
And now take back the doom they gave, and turn
On their own heads the lie : devise such shame
As lewd folk loathe, to gird themselves withal
And wear it for a jewel ; seek and set

The name of liar upon them like a crown,
And bind about them as a coat and cloak
Plain treason and ungilded infamy,
Bare as a beggar ; let them sue for grace,
Kneel here and ask me favour ; save as thus
I treat not with them. Say how I sit here
In this mean raiment, on this naked stone,
Their queen to judge them, and with heart to weigh
Their fault against my mercy ; which yet once,
Though hardly their submission may deserve,
Say, haply they may find.

Re-enter BOTHWELL

BOTHWELL

Good day, my lord.
You look far off upon me ; by your brow
And strange-eyed salutation I may read
The burden of your this day's embassy.
Is it but I whom all these ranked in arms
Are come against to battle ?

DU CROC

Ay, my lord ;
No hand is raised there dangerous to the queen
Nor thought of heart not loyal.

BOTHWELL

Why to me ?
What hurt have I done to them ? none of these
But would be gladly in my place, who had
The heart to seek it ; 'tis the braver man
That ever fortune follows : what I hold

I have won not basely, but from forth her hand
Have ta'en it manlike, and with spirit as good
Have girt me to maintain it. For my part,
I seek no bloodshed, but in single field
Will meet with whom their lot shall fall upon
That shall be found fair champion on their part
To bear the general quarrel ; and to this
My state and present name shall be no bar,
But the queen's consort as her man shall fight
In any good cause simply with God's help
With any sword that shames not mine to meet.

QUEEN

It is my cause ; me must they strike, or none ;
Myself am all the quarrel ; let them yield
Or give me battle.

BOTHWELL

Then, no need of words ;
Let but your excellency stand here by
And see the show as once that envoy bound
'Twixt Hannibal and Scipio ; by God's grace
This too shall be worth sight and good report
If he not fail us.

DU CROC

Madam, with rent heart
Must I take leave then of you.

QUEEN

Sir, farewell :

I pray you say not that you saw me weep ;
These tears are not to turn the sword's edge soft
Nor made of fear nor pity ; but my heart

Holds no more rule on my rebellious eyes
Than truth on those my traitors ; yet I trust
Again to bring both under. [Exit DU CROC.

BOTHWELL

We must fight ;

Yet had I rather take it on mine hand
Than dare the general field.

QUEEN

No, for God's love.

BOTHWELL

God hath not so much love of us to serve ;
Nor would I wager on his head to-day
That he shall fight upon our side. Look there ;
They are at point to cross ; even now you see
The first glint on them stirring of the sun
As they set forth to make by the eastern bank
Along the meadows edgeways towards Dalkeith
Before they turn in wheel and take the hills ;
I see their bent of battle ; yet we keep
The slopes and crest here with our covering lines
If they stand fast.

QUEEN

What, have you fear of that?

BOTHWELL

I cannot tell ; the day grows fiery hot :
I would we might close in at once and strike
Before the noon burn ; all the pause we make

Who stand here idle watchers till they join
Takes off some heart from us for weariness
And gives us doubt ; I would the field were set.

QUEEN

Why should not we that wait for them and chafe
Break rather on them coming, and brush off
Their gathering muster from the hillskirts there
With one sheer stroke of battle as from heaven
Right on them hurling down with all our host
Out of these heights ere they made head below ?

BOTHWELL

No, my sweet captain ; we must hold this fast,
This height of vantage, and keep close our ranks
As I have ranged in order : see again,
How they sweep round and settle fast in file
There on the ridge of Cowsland, with their backs
Turned on the sun that climbs toward noon too fast,
And in their front that hollow gap of hill
Three crossbow-shots across ; so far apart
We look upon each other for a breath
And hold our hands from battle ; but you see
How soon both sides must lash together : yea,
I would we might not hold off yet an hour
But close at once and end.

QUEEN

That burgh below,
Is it not Preston Pans ? These hills are set
As stages for the shew of such high game
As is played out for God's content on earth

Between men's kings and kingdoms ; yet I think
He that beholds hath no such joy o' the game
As he that plays, nor can the joy be known
Save of man only, that man has to play
When the die's throw rings death for him or life.
How clear the wind strikes from the mounting sun—
I am glad at heart the day we have of fight
Should look thus lively on both sides that meet
Beneath so large an open eye of heaven.
The wind and sun are in my blood ; I feel
Their fire and motion in me like a breath
That makes the heart leap. Dear, I too have read
The tale of Rome whence lightly you chose out
A likeness for us ; but the parts we bear,
We are to play them with a difference, take
A fairer end upon us though we fall
Than they that in their hazard were most like
To this our imminent fortune : had I been
She for whose lips love let the round world fall
And all man's empire founder, on that day
When earth's whole strengths met on the warring sea
And side with side clashed of the kingdomed world,
I had not given my galleys wings for fear
To bear me out of the eye of battle, nor
Put space of flight between me and my love,
More than I think on this wave's edge that foams
To leave our chance unshipwrecked, or forsake
My more imperial Antony.

BOTHWELL

Would that now
We stood less near their hazard ; on our part

I fear to see the lines already melt
If we hold longer off, and this firm front
Unfix itself and with no stroke dissolve
As snows in summer : half my folk by this
For thirst are fallen upon the wine-casks there
We brought from Seyton ; and for those that stand,
We have not half their hearts upon our side
Whose hands are armed to uphold it. I must fight
With whom they choose, and take upon my hand
The day with all its issue : if our cause
Be set upon the general cast of fight,
It is but lost. Let messengers be sent
To know of the enemy if his challenge hold
Which I stand armed to answer ; but no Scot
Shall bear the message and betray our need :
Two Frenchmen of your guard shall cross, and bring
Their fighter's name back that my sword must know
And we twain meet and end it in fair field
Between these ranks ; and for my single part,
I am glad the chance should hang but on my hand
And my sole stroke determine the dim war
That flags yet in the dark and doubt of fate
Till mine arm fix it fast, and in God's sight
Confirm and close the chapter of it. Come,
Choose you your envoys.

QUEEN

Nay, choose you the man
That you will fight with ; let him be not one
Who had no part with us in Darnley's blood,
So God shall strike not on his unjust side
Who fights against you.

BOTHWELL

'Faith, if God were judge,
He should not do us right to approve their cause
Who helped us to that slaying, and in its name
Take on them now to accuse us, and appeal
As guiltless to him against their proper deed
And this right hand that wrought but with their will ;
Wherefore so far forth as it hangs on God
From such a champion I should bear the bell,
If he be righteous ; which to assure you of,
That even for God's sake you may feel no fear,
Let Morton meet me.

QUEEN

O, that two-tongued knave !
The worst of all my traitors, whom I spared
And should have slain when you had brought him
home
To help despatch his friend that had been ! nay,
Him shall you meet not : he shall die no death
So brave as by your sword ; the axe thinks long
To clasp his cursed neck ; your hand, dear lord,
Shall not redeem it.

BOTHWELL

Come, content you, sweet ;
Him I must meet, or other ; and myself
Care not if one that struck with us it be
Or one that struck not ; only for your ease,
To make you trustful for God's judgment's sake
And confident of justice, I thought well

To choose a man of counsel with us then
And on this challenge fight with him, that God
Might witness with us of his treacherous cause
If I should win the field ; but by this hand,
I put more trust in it and in my sword
Than in God's hand or judgment. Have no fear ;
What is our cause you know, and in what right
We stand here armed ; vex not your constant heart
To seek for help or warrant more than this,
Which if it cannot stand us yet in stead
It shall avail not to devise fresh means
To underprop with prayer and trust in God
And stay our souls with footless faith or hope
That other might will aid our right than ours.
Here shall we try it : and you, sustain your spirit
Still at its height and poise of fortitude
Firmly to front this infirm face of things
That changes on us gazing, and each hour
Shifts as the wind that shapes it ; fear nor hope,
Bethink yourself, shall make or unmake fate,
Nor faith unbuild or build it, but that end
Will be at last that will be. So, keep heart ;
Choose you two messengers for trust and speed
While I go form again these lines of ours
That break and loosen in the enemy's sight,
If time shall let reshape their ranks, and mend
The breach of their defection ; in short space
Shall we have answer back whom I must meet,
And then my sword shall take this day's chance up
And ease us of its trouble. Nay, make haste ;
Too long I stand yet here ; send off at once
Our message, and bid speed their word again
Before our battle melt out of our hands
And we be ta'en with no man at our back.

SCENE II. *The Camp of the Lords*

MORTON, LINDSAY, DU CROC, KIRKALDY of GRANGE,
and others

MORTON

Will she not let him fight?

KIRKALDY

With no mean man,
Or lesser than himself; he shall not mate
With me nor Tullibardine; we must find
One equal to make proffer of his hand,
And by these messengers again returned
That brought her first word and took back our own
Himself now bids you forth by name to take
This justice on your sword.

MORTON

And by my hand,
I am as glad as of his present death
That I should be the man of all chosen out
To lay his death upon him. Let him know
I am armed by this for answer.

LINDSAY

Nay, my lord;
Who fights with Bothwell on this general plea
For all the land's sake, should not only bear
The right upon his sword of this large cause,

But stand in the eye of all the land so far
From all men's charge or any man's conceit
That might repute him touched or mixed at all
With Bothwell's works, or once but on his part
Suspected in time past or glanced upon
Of enemies' eyes as parcel of his act,
That no sharp tongue on earth might find the mean
To tax his victory with unrighteousness
If he should conquer,—as were yours the sword
I doubt not it should surely—nor dispute
The justice and pure truth that on our side
Took up this challenge. You, they know, were one
Of that dead man once wronged, and sworn, they say,
To turn his treacheries on his head alive
And with his own lie pierce him as a sword ;
He never did me wrong, nor gave men cause
To deem his death a thing that I should seek
As just and natural part of my desire ;
So shall none hold it questionable or strange
If I should stand against his slayer in arms
As to do battle on the dead man's part
That was toward me no traitor.

MORTON

Well, my lord,
Take you then this upon you ; to your hand
I shall not grudge to yield that honour up
Which none more noble in the world might wield
Nor heart more true deserve ; in sign whereof
Here from mine own side I ungird the sword
Which was my grandsire's, whose two-handed stroke
Did suchlike service as shall you to-day
To Scotland, in his hand that belled the cat,

When other slaves that clung about the throne
Made the land foul as this doth ; to which end
I gird you with it, that its edge again
May lop as high a dangerous head away
And shear a weed as poisonous. This it was
That drove to death even with its lift and flash
The crew of Cochrane, as in scorn to smite
Their necks that craved the halter, and were bowed
Before the light and wind but of its stroke
Down to the dust and death ; and this again
Struck with one blow to hell by Fala brook
Spens of Kilspindie, who being overblown
With favour and light love of the fourth James
Gave with his life all these to Douglas up
At the first change of sword-play ; from such hand
By heritage I have it, as from mine
You now, my lord, by gift ; and I well think
That in those great dead hands of Bell-the-Cat
It did no worthier work than ere we sleep
This land in yours shall see it.

LINDSAY

Sir, with glad heart

I take the burden to me thankfully
That this great gift lays on ; as with my hands
I strip this armour off and take from yours
To gird my body left else weaponless
This the most prosperous and most noble steel
That ever did truth right, so from my soul
God witness me that I put off all thought
Save of his justice to be served and shown,
And keep no memory more to enforce my hand
That he for whose dead sake I am girt to fight

With one that slew him was of my kindred blood,
Nor this mine own foe that I seek to slay,
But only that I stand here single-souled
For this land's sake and all its noble brood,
To do their judgment on his murderous head
Who is their general traitor ; and I pray
Here on my knees before these warlike lines

[*Kneeling.*

That God on whom I call will equally
This day preserve and punish in men's sight
The just and unjust that he looks upon,
With blameless hand dividing their just doom
To one and other ; yea, as thou art Lord,
With eye to read between our hearts, and hand
To part between us punishment and grace,
Hear, God, and judge : and as thy sentence is
So shall man's tongue speak ever of this day
And of his cause that conquers.

MORTON

Laird of Grange,

While these that twice brought message from the
queen

Bear now this last news back of what they hear,
Lest when the traitor knows whom he shall meet
His foul heart fail him and his false foot flee
By what way forth is left him toward Dunbar,
Take you two hundred horse, and with good speed
Cross to the right beyond this hollow ground
And cut him off ; so though he fain would fly
And she stand fast or follow, yet we hold
As in one toil the lioness and the wolf
That clomb by night into the lion's bed,

Who stand now staked about with nets and ringed
With pikes and hounds of hunters, glare at bay
With eyes and teeth that shine against us yet,
But the fierce feet are trammelled in our toils
Nor shall the tongues lap life again of man.

DU CROC

Ay, lion-like, my lord, she bears herself,
As who should shake all spears or shafts away
Like leaves that fell upon her, and all fears
As grains of dust brushed off ; but he too makes
Such gallant show at need of such good heart
As in this utter peril where he stands
Might win for one that had no unjust cause
Pity and praise of enemies, and for him
At least such mingled and discoloured fame
As falls not on a coward ; nor can men
Report him in his end and sore extreme
But as a soldier tried of hand and brain,
Skilful and swift, with heart to match his eye
And wit to serve them ; could these yet avail
To ransom him by spirit of soldiership
And craft with courage tempered as with fire
To wield with fiery cunning the wide war,
He should not fall but mightily, nor cease
But with a strife as earthquake.

MORTON

Well, my lord,
With no such strife we think to win him.—Go,
And if they send again to treat with us
Speak you with her and bring us once more word.

SCENE III. *The Queen's Camp**The QUEEN and BOTHWELL*

QUEEN

Are we quite lost ?

BOTHWELL

Ay, if I fight not : but
I will not die and fight not.

QUEEN

What, no help ?
Is there not left a score of manlike men
To stand and strike round us that in their ring
May fight enclosed and fall where none shall fly ?
Are all our strengths slid from us ? not one troop
That has not piecemeal dropped with shame away ?
Not some twelve friends to back us yet and die
As never men died nobler ?

BOTHWELL

No, not three :
My levies there of Lothian and the Merse
Are slipped away like water ; of your men
Not yet four hundred lie along the heights,
Nor half will stay of these a half-hour hence.
Look too where yonder rides about the hill
The Laird of Grange between us and Dunbar
As to make onset with two hundred horse
Thence where the way is smooth, while those in front
Charge up the hill right on our unfenced camp

And their trap's teeth shut on us. This remains
Of all our chance, this one way to make end,
That while they yet refuse me not a man
To bear the day's weight on his sword and mine
I go to meet whom they soever choose
With no more question made ; and this I will,
If yet they grant me but their meanest man
For opposite as equal.

QUEEN

Have they hearts,
That have you for their fiery star of fight
To see and not to follow ? That I could
But give mine own among all these away
And with the parcels of it portioned out
Divide myself into a hundred hearts
Of manlier-spirited blood, to raise us up
For these a tribe of soldiers ! Speak to them,
And they will hear and hunger to go on
Full of your words to death ; yea, all as I
Will thirst to die around you. O my God !
What is their blood that it can kindle not
To be so called of such a chief to die,
To hear his words and leap not ? Hast thou made
Such stuff of man's flesh as we take for man,
And mixed not soul enough to serve the hound
Who gives for love his life up ? These go back,
These that might die, they start aside from death,
They have no joy to close with it, but fear,
These that I deemed, come what might worst on us,
Should fall with face and heart one fire of joy
To ride on death and grapple him and die.
Have I not heard of men once in the world ?

I see none only but mine only love,
Who finds not one to follow. You shall fight,
And if we thrive not shame them with your end
As I with mine ensuing. That I might stand
Your second, and my sword be page to yours,
As on your death my death should wait at need
And halt not after ! No, you shall not die.
O miserable white hanging hands, that rest
Baffled and bloodless ! let your kingdom go,
Let all things pass together ; what of price
Should ye keep back that could not fight for him
Who falls for lack of seconds ? Nay, the fault
Comes all of me that fail him, I it is
Bring down that high head to the earth with mine,
That helmless head, for my sake ; O, for love's,
Kiss me, and kill me ! be not wroth, but strike,
For if I live I shall but deal more death
And where I would not shall the more destroy,
Living and loving ; yea, whom I would save,
Him shall I slay the surelier ; save then me,
Lest I do this and dying abhor myself,
Save me and slay ; let not my love again
Kill more than me, that would have shed my blood
To spare the blood I shed ; make me now sure ;
Let me cease here.

BOTHWELL

Peace, and give heed ; you see
Whither the day has brought us, and what hope
Holds anywhere of rescue ; this one lot
Lies in my hand by fortune to be drawn,
That yet by God's and by our enemies' grace
I may fight singly though my whole world fail
And end no less than soldier. Now, my queen,

As you are highest of women's hearts that live
And nobler than your station stands your soul—
As you had never fear, and in this past
As ever you have loved me—by such sign
And in such name I charge you, put me not
In this great need to shame ; let me go forth
As should yourself being king, had you the cause
That our linked loves put on me ; by that heart
That is so fain within you to be man's,
Make me not meaner than the man I am
Nor worthless of the name ; think with what soul
Would you stand up to battle in my stead,
And wrong me not to pluck that prize away
Which were you I you would not yield to me
Nor I would ask of you ; desire not this,
To have me for your sake so vile a thing,
When I should rise up worthiest, that no man
Could bear such name and live ; bid me not be,
Because you love me that are first on earth
And crowned of queens most royal, such a slave
As might not seek and be not spit upon
The foulest favour that is given for gold
From lips more vile than all things else but I
Who durst not fight for you ; make me not this ;
Let me die rather such a man as might,
Having your love, had fortune loved him too,
Have lived beside you kinglike, and not left
Less memory than a king's.

QUEEN

O, you shall go :
Look how I hold you not ; yes, you shall fight,
And I sit strengthless here.—You shall not yet ;

If I did know that God were with my heart,
Then should you go indeed ; could I sit sure
My prayer had power upon him, and my cause
Had made him mine to fight for me, and take
My charge and this field's issue in his hand,
I would not doubt to send you. Nay, myself
Will speak to those my soldiers ; they will fight ;
They shall not choose for shame who hear me speak
But fear to fight not. O, for all this yet,
If they were men about me, they would sweep
Those traitors from the hill-side as a wind
And make me way to live. What, if I speak,
If I kneel to them, each man by his name,
Bid him fight for me though I be not king,
His king to lead him—as, had I been born
My father's son, they should have fought, and found
A king to fight for and a sword to lead
Worth many a good sword's following—nay, but these
That will not fight for you whose sword they see
Worth all their swords to follow, for no king's
Would they take heart to strike. Love, you shall go ;
Send out a flag to bid one come and say
Who dares of all fight with you. Why, methought
This march-folk loved you and your sword's bright
name
That burned along their borders ; is there left
No such fierce love of theirs and faith at need
To do us soldier's service ?

BOTHWELL

Look, and see ;
Their ranks unknit themselves and slide more fast
From the bare slopes away whereon they stand

Than the last leaves or the last snows that fade
From off the fields or branches : and this thaw
Speaks not our spring, but winter. Let them pass ;
If I may stand but in mine enemy's face,
One foot of ours shall slip not, and one hand
Be reddened on our side. I will go send
Word with your flag of truce by Ormiston,
To bid their spokesman to us. [Exit.

QUEEN

What am I worth,
That can nor fight nor pray ? my heart is shut
As a sealed spring of fire, and in mine ears
This air that holds no thunder but fair day
Sounds louder than a stricken brazen bell
That rings in a great wind, or the blown sea
That roars by night for shipwreck.

Re-enter BOTHWELL with KIRKALDY

BOTHWELL

Here is he
That brings our lords' will with him, and shall show
But in your private ear ; I while you please
Will wait apart upon you. [Retires.

QUEEN

Is it you,
Is it my friend of France, my knight and friend,
Comes on such errand in mine extreme need
To me that honoured him ? Sir, time has been
That had one asked me what man most on earth
I would for trust have sought the service of

In such sore straits as this, I had found no name
But yours to leap the first upon my lips,
On whom I have seen my father the French king
Point with his hand, saying, *Yonder goes there one
Of the most valiant men in all our age,*
And ever would he choose you on his side
In all his pastimes for your manhood's sake
And might in jousts of men and gallant games,
And when they shot for mastery at the butts
Would make you shoot two arrows still for one,
And took delight beyond all shots of theirs
To see how far forth would your great shaft fly,
Sped for his pleasure ; and my heart grew great
For my land's sake whereof your strength was made,
That bore such men for honour ; and the best
Who served my father Henry in his wars
Looked reverently upon you horsed at head
Of your brave hundred men that rode with you,
And never the great constable of France
Would speak to you uncovered as to one
Less than his own place worthy ; and your hand
Here on these marches hath not lost its praise
For many as fair a stroke as overthrew
Between our ranks and the English in mid field
Lord Rivers' brother, fighting for this land
That with a tongue as true and serviceable
You strove in speech to save the freedom of,
That by no policy it should be subdued
To a French province ; so for faith and love,
For valour, wisdom, and for gentleness,
I wist no Scot had worthier name alive :
Shall I say now I have no deadlier foe ?

[KIRKALDY *kneels.*

I do not bid you kneel ; speak, and stand up ;

I have no help or comfort of men's knees,
Nor pleasure of false worship; well I know,
For all knees bowed, how hearts and hands are bent
Of mine own men against me. Speak, I pray;
I am as their servant bound who speak in you
And open-eared to hear them.

KIRKALDY

From the lords,
Madam, no word I have to bring but one,
That from this field they will not part alive
Without the man in bonds they came to seek;
Him will they take, or die: but on your part
They have no thought that is not set to serve
And do you honour, would but you forsake
The murderer of your husband, who to you
Can be no husband, being but lately wed
To the earl of Huntley's sister and your friend
By your own mean and favour.

QUEEN (*to BOTHWELL*)

Hold, my lord;
Let not your man give fire.—Sir, guard yourself;
See you not where one stands to shoot at you?—
You will not do me this dishonour, seeing
I have given my faith he should come safely through
And go back safe?

BOTHWELL

Why, let him then, and say
That I will yet maintain my proffered cause
To fight with any that shall challenge me
Of the king's murder.

KIRKALDY

Sir, the first was I
To let you wit myself would fight with you
Upon that quarrel ; and the first refused,
As being nor earl nor lord nor mate of yours,
But a poor baron only ; the like word
You sent to Tullibardine ; in whose place
Stands now my lord of Lindsay, if your heart
Yet fail you not to meet him, as it seems
Now to grow cold in shadow of his sword
That hangs against you in the air advanced,
Darkening your sight and spirit.

BOTHWELL (*to the QUEEN*)

Shall this be said,
This shame go forth for ever through the world
Of one that held you by the wedded hand
And loosed it even for fear? Now, let me go :
There is no way now but the best, and this
You shall no more forbid me : one last time
I do implore you make not of your love
The branding-iron that should sign me slave
In sight of all men always, and on you
Stamp the vile name of wife to no true man
But harlot of a coward : who shall spare
To throw that name and shame on such a love
As came to such an end as ours shall come
If here its sun set bloodless, but more red
With shame than blood could brand it ?

QUEEN

I have thought
And set my heart against all chance to come

Of blame or blood that ever shall mark me ;
Alone I take it on mine only hand,
And will not yield this one thing up to yours,
Who have yielded all things else, and this I would,
But that I may not with my soul alive.
Sir, if my lords within whose hand I am
Shall stand content to let my husband go,
Into their ward will I give up myself
On what good terms shall please them to call good,
So he may pass forth freely with such friends
Of these that have not hands enough to fight
As shall cleave to him ; I pray you make good speed,
And let this day have end.

KIRKALDY

• Madam, I go. [*Exit.*]

QUEEN

Do not speak yet : a word should burst my heart ;
It is a hollow crystal full of tears
That even a breath might break, and they be spilt
And life run out with them ; no diamond now,
But weaker than of wax. Life of that heart,
There is but one thing hath no remedy,
Death ; all ills else have end or hope of end
And time to work their worst before time change ;
This death has none ; there is all hope shut fast,
All chance bound up for ever : change nor time
Can help nor comfort this. You shall not die ;
I can hold fast no sense of thought but this,
You shall not.

BOTHWELL

Well, being sundered, we may live,
And living meet ; and here to hold the field
Were but a deadly victory, and my hand
The mockery of a conqueror's ; we should pass
No less their prisoners from the field thus won
Than from these lists defeated. You do well ;
They dare not urge or strain the power they have
To bring me prisoner where my witness borne
Might show them parcel of the deed and guilt
For which they rise up to lay hold on me
As upright men of doom, and with pure hands
To hale me to their judgment. I will go,
Till good time bring me back ; and you that stay,
Keep faith with me.

QUEEN

O, how does one break faith ?
What are they that are faithless ? by my love,
I cannot tell or think how I should lie,
Should live and lie to you that are my faith,
My soul, my spirit, my very and only God,
My truth and trust that makes me true of heart,
My life that feeds and light that lightens me,
My breath and blood of living. Doth God think
How I shall be without you ? what strange breath
Shall my days draw, what strange blood feed my life,
When this life that is love is gone from them
And this light lost ? Where shall my true life go,
And by what far ways follow to find love,
Fly where love will ? Where will you turn from me ?

BOTHWELL

Hence will I to Dunbar, and thence again
There is no way but northward and to ship
From the north islands ; thence betimes abroad
By land or sea to lurk and find my life
Till the wheel turn.

QUEEN

Ah God, that we were set
Far out at sea alone by storm and night
To drive together on one end, and know
If life or death would give us good or ill
And night or day receive, and heaven or earth
Forget us or remember !—He comes back ;
Here is the end.

BOTHWELL

But till time change his tune ;
No more nor further. We shall find our day.

QUEEN

Have we not found ? I know not what we shall,
But what hath been and is, and whence they are,
God knows if now I know not. He is here.

Re-enter KIRKALDY

KIRKALDY

Madam, the lords return by me this word,
With them must you go back to Edinburgh
And there be well entreated as of friends ;

And for the duke, they are with one mind content
He should part hence for safe and present flight ;
But here may tarry not or pass not free.
This is the last word from them by my mouth.

QUEEN

Ay is it, sir ; the last word I shall hear—
Last in mine ear for ever : no command
Nor threat of man shall I give ear to more,
That have heard this.—Will you not go, my lord ?
It is not I would hold you.

BOTHWELL

Then, farewell,
And keep your word to me. What, no breath more ?
Keep then this kiss too with the word you gave,
And with them both my heart and its good hope
To find time yet for you and me. Farewell. [*Exit.*

QUEEN

O God ! God ! God !

Cover my face for me :
I cannot heave my hand up to my head ;
Mine arms are broken.

Is he got to horse ?
I do not think one can die more than this.
I did not say farewell.

KIRKALDY

My lord is gone.

QUEEN

Whom spake I to? I have no woman here.
All these men's eyes have seen my naked face
Wrung without tears for anguish, and no hand
Hide my blind eyes if haply they might weep
Great drops of blood and fiery.—Laird of Grange,
I yield myself upon such terms to you
As in these lords' name you rehearsed to me ;
Have here my hand for sign.

KIRKALDY

Upon this hand

I lay the loyal witness of my lips
For duteous heart and service, and crave leave
That I may lead your highness through these ranks
Where at the hill's foot we may find your friends
Who shall come forth to meet you as their queen
With all fair reverence.

QUEEN

Lead me to my lords ;

For one so poor a servant as I am
Here are too many masters. I could pray,
But that they lack my service and should chafe
If I dwelt long upon my prayer and let
My duty sleep or slacken toward them ; else
I could pray God to shut up from these lands
His hand and eye of favour, that no dew
Might breed herefrom and no bloom break again
Nor grass be glad for ever ; rain nor sun
Comfort their cankered face and hardening heart,

Nor hand that tilled or foot that trod of man
Pass and not curse them. Let me look but once
Upon this hill whereon till this ninth hour
Mine enemies' hands have crucified my heart.
The sun burns yet and the stream runs ; nor eye
Nor ear have these nor pity. Come, I talk,
Who had no mind ; God will not heed me ; come.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *The Camp of the Lords*

MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, &c.

MORTON

What, is the Frenchman gone ?

LINDSAY

With heavy cheer,
By this to set sad foot in Edinburgh.

MORTON

There should we be by nightfall ; and you see
How the day reddens downward, and this hill
Hath all its west side fiery ; he hath done
The queen and us small service, to put off
Her hour of yielding. Look, the last spears left
Begin to move in sunder ; there he flies,
The traitor, with his heartless handful backed
That yet for fear cling to him : and on this side
Grange leads her down the hill between our horse,
Who comes not like one captive.

Enter the QUEEN and KIRKALDY

QUEEN

Tell me, sirs,
Are they my doomsmen whom I come to find
And those your headsman who stand sworded there
And visored soldier-like, that cry on me
To burn and slay me? let me have quick doom,
And be beyond their crying.

MORTON

Madam, I think
You cannot fear of us a deadly doom,
Nor shall you find. Silence those throats, I say.

QUEEN

I have not said I feared; nor shall there come
For you that lying breath upon my lips.
What will ye do with what of me ye have
If not what these tongues cry for?

MORTON

Some man ride—
You, Laird of Grange, with two or three at back,
And with the flatlong stroke of your good swords
Smite their mouths dumb. Madam, take you no
 heed;
They shall not hurt you.

QUEEN

Sir, no heed have I;
I think these common haters shall not hurt

Indeed, nor smite me but with tongues ; 'tis you,
My good lords only, from whose noble hands
I look to take my death, who would not lose
Nor lack this royal office. For my sake
Do them no hurt, I pray, who are but your mouths
As you their hands ; I see no choice of you,
Or them the lesser traitors.

HUME

I will go :

Ride you that way, sir, by their ranks who shout,
As I this side ; for every way men hear
How the field rings that all the hills roar back
With noise of names and cries to burn the whore
And murderess of her husband : spare no strokes
To shame or smite them silent.

QUEEN

You, my friends,

Good servants that have care of my good name,
And loyal lovers—of your love and grace,
May it please you show me whither I must go
To find what face of death ? or if yet none,
And yet ye have not the hardy hearts to slay,
To uncrown and slay me, I require you then
Deliver me into my kinsmen's hands
Of the house of Hamilton, in whose good ward
I am content to abide men's evil will
With honourable surety ; which refused,
Of life nor honour shall I hold me sure
For all your vows and voices, but esteem
My life to be as all your honours, dead.

MORTON

Madam, with mocks you cannot make us mad,
To bring you to their trustless hands whose ward
Should be to you but dangerous, and to us
And all this kingdom's hope in heritage
And all men's good most mortal. You must go
With us to Edinburgh, and being made safe
Abide the judgment there that shall not fall
By fierce election of men's clamorous mouths
Whose rage would damn you to the fire-clad death,
But by their sentence who shall do no wrong,
If justice may with honour make them sure
And faith defend from error.

QUEEN

Ay, my lord ?

I shall be doomed then ere I die, and stand
Before their face for judgment who should kneel
To take my sentence as a scourge, and bear
What brand my tongue set on them ? Nay, ye are
mad ;

Kings have been slain with violence and red craft
Or fallen by secret or by popular hands,
But what man heard yet ever of a king
Set to the bar of his own men to plead
For life with rebels' reasons, and wage words
With whoso dare of all these baser born
Rise up to judge him ? Surely I shall die,
Be rent perchance in pieces of men's fangs,
But of their mouths not sentenced : in fair field
That only steel that bids a king's neck stoop
Is the good sword that in a warlike hand
Makes his head bow and cuts not off his crown

But with the stroke of battle ; who hath seen
By doom of man a king's head kingdomless
Bow down to the axe and block ? so base an edge
Can bite not on such necks. Let me bleed here,
By their swift hands who ravin for my blood,
Or be assured how if ye let me live
I live to see you die for me as dogs :
Ye shall be hanged on crosses, nailed on rows,
For birds to rend alive ; ye shall have doom,
A dog's doom and a traitor's, and the cord
Strangle the sentence in your labouring lips
And break the plea that heaves your throat and leaves
Your tongue thrust forth to blacken ; ye shall wage
Words and try causes with the worms and flies
Till they leave bare your bones to sun and wind
As shame shall leave your titles. Was it you
[To LINDSAY.

That were to fight before me with my lord ?
Give me your hand, sir ; by this hand of yours
I swear for this thing yet to have your head,
And so thereof assure you.

MORTON

Bid the camp
Strike and set forth behind us. Sirs, to horse ;
And, madam, be not yet so great of speech
As utterly to outwear your spirit of strength
With pain and passion that can bear no fruit
But wind and wrath and barren bitterness.
Vex not yourself more than your foes would vex,
Of whom we would be none that ride with you
From them to guard you that would lay red hands
On you yet faint and weak from this fierce day.

QUEEN

My body and head wax faint, but not my heart ;
I have yet there fire enough for all of you,
To burn your strengths up that my feebler limbs
Can make my heart not yield to nor bow down,
Nor fear put out its fires. Come, worthy lords,
And lead me to my loving town again
That bears your heads not yet above its gates
Where I shall see them festering if I live. [*Exeunt*

SCENE V. *Edinburgh. A Room in the Provost's
House*

Enter MAITLAND and PROVOST

MAITLAND

Are the gates fast ?

PROVOST

Ay ; but the street yet seethes
With ebb and flow of fighting faces thronged
And crush of onset following on her heel
Where she came in and whence at her own call
You drove them off her ; and above the ranks
Flaps the flag borne before her as she came
Wrought with the dead king's likeness ; and their cry
Is yet to burn or drown her. It were but
A manlike mercy now for men to show
That she should have some woman's hand of hers
To tend her fainting who should be nigh dead
With fear and lack of food and weariness.

MAITLAND

Nay, if she die not till she die for fear,
She must outlive man's memory ; twice or thrice
As she rode hither with that sable flag
Blown overhead whereon the dead man lay
Painted, and by him beneath a garden tree
His young child kneeling, with soft hands held up
And the word underwritten of his prayer
Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord—she seemed
At point to swoon, being sick with two days' fast,
And with faint fingers clung upon the rein
And gaped as one athirst with foodless lips
And fair head fainting ; but for very scorn
Was straightway quickened and uplift of heart,
And smote us with her eyes again, and spoke
No weaker word but of her constant mind
To hang and crucify, when time should be,
These now her lords and keepers ; so at last
Beneath these walls she came in with the night,
So pressed about with foes that man by man
We could but bring her at a foot's pace through
Past Kirk of Field between the roaring streets,
Faint with no fear, but hunger and great rage,
With all men's wrath as thunder at her heel,
And all her fair face foul with dust and tears,
But as one fire of eye and cheek that shone
With heat of fiery heart and unslaked will
That took no soil of fear.

PROVOST

What shall be done
When sentence shall pass on her ?

MAITLAND

By my will

She shall not die nor lose her royal name,
Wherein the council only shall bear rule
And take to its own hand the care to wreak
On her false lord now fled our general wrong,
Who being but overtaken of its sword
Shall be divorced at once from her and life.

PROVOST

But this shall not content the common will,
Nor theirs who bind and loose it with their tongues
And cry now for her blood ; the town is loud
With women's voices keener than of men
To call for judgment on her and swift death
Sharp as their anger.

MAITLAND

Ay, the time is mad
With noise of preachers and the feminine spleen
That of mere rage and blind mobility
Barks in brute heat for blood ; but on these tongues
The state yet hangs not, nor the general weal
Is swayed but by the violent breath of these.
Here sits she safe.

PROVOST

I would I knew it ; her mood
Is as a wind that blows upon a fire,
And drives her to and fro : she will not eat,
But rages here and there and cries again
On us for traitors, on her friends for help,

On God for comfort of her cause and crown
That of his foes and hers is violated,
And will not stint her clamours nor take rest
For prayer nor bidding.

MAITLAND

I will speak with her
Ere I go hence ; though she were mild of mood,
The task were hard with Knox for opposite
To bend the council to such policy
As might assure her but of life, which thus
She whets the weapon in his tongue to take. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *Another Room in the same*

The QUEEN and an Attendant

QUEEN

Wilt thou be true ? but if thou have not heart,
Yet do not, being too young to sell man's blood,
Betray my letter to mine enemies' hands
Where it should be a sword to smite me with ;
If thou lack heart, I say, being but a boy,
Swear not and break thine oath ; but if thou have,
Thou shalt not ask for this mine errand done
The thing I will not give thee. At Dunbar
Bring but this letter to my husband's hand ;
Spare for no speed ; if it were possible,
I would it might be with him ere day dawn
On me condemned of men. I have no hope,

Thou seest, but in thee only ; thou art young
And mean of place, but be thou good to me
And thou shalt sit above thy masters born
And nobles grey in honour. Wilt thou go ?
Have here mine only jewel, and my faith
That I plight to thee, when my hand may choose,
To give thee better gifts. Haste, and so thrive
As I by thee shall. [*Exit Attendant.*]

Though thou play me false,
Thou dost no more than God has done with me
And all men else before thee : yet I could not
But write this worthless one word of my love
Though I should die for writing it in vain,
And he should never read it.

Enter MAITLAND

Come you not
To tell me of my commons and your friends
That by their will despite you I must die ?
It were no stranger now than all things are
That fall as on me dreaming.

MAITLAND

Madam, no ;
I come to plead with you for your own life,
Which wrath and violent mood would cast away.

QUEEN

What is my life to any man or me
As ye have made it ? If ye seek not that,
Why have ye torn me from my husband's hand,

With whom ye know that I would live and die
With all content that may be in the world?

MAITLAND

For your own honour have we sundered you ;
You know not him, who late writ word—myself
Can show this letter—to the Lady Jane,
She was his wife and you his concubine,
No more but sport and scandal in his sheets,
And loved for use but as a paramour
And for his ends to rise and by your lips
Be kissed into a kingdom ; and each week
Since they were first but as in show divorced
And but of craft divided, on some days
Have they held secret commerce to your shame
As wedded man and wife.

QUEEN

There is one thing
That I would ask of even such friends as you—
To turn me with my lord adrift at sea
And make us quit of all men.

MAITLAND

For yourself,
You drive on no less danger here of wreck,
Seeing for your life if England take no care
France will nor strike nor speak ; and had you not
In your own kindly kingdom yet some friends
Whose hearts are better toward you, these wot well
You had none left you helpful in the world.
Yet what we may will I and all these do

To serve you in this strait ; so for this night
Let not your peril, which can breed not fear,
For that breed anger in you ; and farewell. [*Exit.*

QUEEN

None but such friends ? O yet my living lord,
O still my comfort, hadst thou none but me
As I save thee have no man, we would go
Hand fast in hand to dreadless death, and see
With such clear eyes as once our marriage-bed
Fire, or the sword's light lifted to make end
Of that one life on both our lips that laughed
To think he could not sunder them who smote,
Nor change our hearts who chilled them ; we would
kiss,

Laugh, and lie down, and sleep ; but here in bonds
I will not tamely like a dumb thing die
That gives its blood and speaks not. If I find
No faith in all this people, yet my curse
Shall through this casement cry in all their ears
That are made hard against me.—Ho there, you,
All that pass by, your queen am I that call,
Have I no friend of all you to turn back
The swords that point on this bare breast, the hands
That grasp and hale me by the hair to death,
By this discrowned rent hair that wore too soon
The kingdom's weight of all this land in gold ?
Have I no friend ? no friend ?

VOICE WITHOUT

Ay, here was one ;
Know you yet him ? Raise up the banner there,

That she may look upon her lord, and take
Comfort.

A WOMAN

What, was not this that kneels the child
Which hung once at that harlot's breast now bare
And should have drunk death from its deadly milk?
Hide it for shame; bind up the wanton hair,
Cover the poisonous bosom; here is none
To kiss the print of that adulterer's head
Which last lay on it.

ANOTHER VOICE

Whither is he flown,
Whose amorous lips were bloody, and left red
The shameless cheek they fed on as with shame?
Where is your swordsman at your back to guard
And make your sin strut kinglike? where his hand
That made this dead man's child kneel fatherless
And plead with God against you for his blood?
Where is your king-killer?

QUEEN

The day shall be
That I will make this town a fire, and slake
The flame with blood of all you: there shall stand
No mark of man, no stone of these its walls,
To witness what my wrath made ruin of
That turned it first to smoke, and then put out
With all your blood its ashes.

Enter PROVOST

Hear you, sir,
How we are handled of our townsfolk there,
Being yet in ward of you? but by my head,
If now by force it fall not, you as these
Shall buy this of me bloodily, and first
Shall bleed of all whose lives will pay not me.

PROVOST

Madam, as you desire to see that day,
Contain yourself; this flame whereon you blow
Will fasten else untimely on your hand
And leave it harmless toward us. I beseech you,
Though but for hate of us and hope to hurt,
Eat, and take rest.

QUEEN

I will not; what are ye
That I should care for hate of you to live
Who care not for the love's sake of my life?
If I shall die here in your hateful hands,
In God's I put my cause, as into them
I yield the spirit that dares all enemies yet
By force to take it from me. Die or live
I needs must at their bidding; but to sleep,
Eat, drink, weep, laugh, speak or keep silence, these
They shall not yet command me till I die. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. *The High Street**A crowd of* CITIZENS

FIRST CITIZEN

Who says she shall not die ?

SECOND CITIZEN

Even he that stands
First in this city, Morton ; by his doom,
Death shall not pass upon her.

FIRST CITIZEN

Will he say it ?
Yet is this man not all the tongue or hand
That Scotland has to speak or smite with.

THIRD CITIZEN

Nay,
When he so spake against their honest voice
Who called for judgment, one arose that said—
I know not who, but one that spake for God—
That he who came between God's sword and her
Should as a stayer of justice by the sword
Be stricken of God's justice.

FIRST CITIZEN

What said he ?

THIRD CITIZEN

No word, but frowned ; and in his eye and cheek
There sprang a fire and sank again, as 'twere
For scorn that anger should have leave to speak,
Though silently ; but Maitland writhed his lip
And let his teeth grin doglike, and between
There shot some snarling word that mocked at God,
And at the servants of his wrath, who wait
To see his will done on her, and men's hands
Made ministers to set it forth so broad
That none might pass and read not.

SECOND CITIZEN

Why, by this
Part hangs of it already in men's sight ;
I have word here from Dunbar of one that was
An officer of Bothwell's, and alive
Laird of Blackadder, whom they seized at sea
Flying from death to deathward, and brought back
To be nigh rent in pieces of their hands
Who haled him through the streets to hang, and left
Not half a man unbroken or unbruised
To feel the grip o' the gallows.

FIRST CITIZEN

They did well ;
Shall we do worse, that have within our hand
The heart and head of all this evil, her
By whom all guilt looks guiltless till she die
A whore's death or a murderer's, burn or drown,
And leave more free the common doom of man
To pass on lesser sins ? While she doth live,

How should it speak for shame to bid men die
For what sin done soever, who might say
She lives and laughs yet in God's face and eye
And finds on earth no judgment as do these
Whose bloodiest hands are whiter than her soul?
Let her die first.

THIRD CITIZEN

Ay shall she, if God put
Upon those lips that never lacked it yet
His fire to burn men's hearts, and make that tongue
His sword that hath been ever. Yesternight
Came Knox to Edinburgh, and here should speak
By this among us of the doom to fall
On us or her, that if it bruise her not
Must glance aside against us.

SECOND CITIZEN

He is here.
Draw nigh, but make no noise.

Enter JOHN KNOX

FIRST CITIZEN

Nay, all the press
Heaves round about him silent.

OTHERS

Sirs, give place ;
Make way for Master Knox to stand and speak
Here in your midst ; here is it higher ; give way.
Make room to hear him. Peace there, and stand still.

JOHN KNOX

What word is this that ye require of man ?
Ye that would hear me, what speech heard of mine
Should lift your hearts up if they sit not high,
If they lack life, should quicken ? for this day
Ye know not less than I know that the Lord
Hath given his enemy to you for a prey,
His judgment for a fire ; what need have ye,
Or he what need of other tongues to speak
Than this which burns all ears that hear on earth
The blast of this day's justice blown in heaven—
As where is he that hears not ? In your hand
Lies now the doom of God to deal, and she
Before your face to abide it, in whose mouth
His name was as a hissing ; and had I
The tongues in mine of angels, and their might,
What other word or mightier should I seek
Than this to move you ? or should ye wax cold
What fuel should I find out to kindle you ?
If God ye hear not, how shall ye hear me ?
Or if your eyes be sealed to know not her,
If she be fit to live or no, can I
With words unseal them ? None so young of you
But hath long life enough to understand
And reason to record what he hath seen
Of hers and of God's dealings mutually
Since she came in. Then was her spirit made
soft,
Her words as oil, and with her amorous face
She caught men's eyes to turn them where she would,
And with the strong sound of her name of queen
Made their necks bend ; that even of God's own men
There were that bade refuse her not her will,

Deny not her, fair woman and great queen,
Her natural freedom born, to give God praise
What way she would, and pray what prayers ; though
these

Be as they were, to God abominable
And venomous to men's souls. So came there back
The cursed thing cast forth of us, and so
Out of her fair face and imperious eyes
Lightened the light whereby men walk in hell.
And I that sole stood out and bade not let
The lightning of this curse come down on us
And fly with feet as fire on all winds blown
To burn men's eyes out that beheld God's face,
That being long blind but now gat sight, and saw
And praised him seeing—I that then spake and said,
Ten thousand men here landed of our foes
Were not so fearful to me on her side
As one mass said in Scotland—that withstood
The man to his face I loved, her father's son,
Then mastered by the pity of her, and made
Through that good mind not good—who then but I
Was taxed of wrongful will, and for hard heart
Miscalled of men? And now, sirs, if her prayer
Were just and reasonable, and unjust I
That bade shut ears against it—if the mass
Hath brought forth innocent fruit, and in this land
Wherein she came to stablish it again
Hath stablished peace with honour—if in her
It hath been found no seed of shame, and she
That loved and served it seem now in men's sight
No hateful thing nor fearful—if she stand
Such a queen proven as should prove honourable
The rule of women, and in her that thing
Be shown forth good that was called evil of me,

Blest and not curst—then have I sinned, and they
That would have crossed me would have crossed not
God :

Whereof now judge ye. Hath she brought with her
Peace, or a sword? and since her incoming
Hath the land sat in quiet, and the men
Seen rest but for one year? or came not in
Behind her feet, right at her back, and shone
Above her crowned head as a fierier crown,
Death, and about her as a raiment wrapt
Ruin? and where her foot was ever turned
Or her right hand was pointed, hath there fallen
No fire, no cry burst forth of war, no sound
As of a blast blown of an host of men
For summons of destruction? Hath God shown
For sign she had found grace in his sight, and we
For her sake favour, while she hath reigned on us,
One hour of good, one week of rest, one day?
Or hath he sent not for an opposite sign
Dissensions, wars, rumours of wars, and change,
Flight and return of men, terror with power,
Triumph with trembling? Hath one foot stood fast,
One head not bowed, one face not veiled itself,
One hand not hidden? Was this once or twice
That ye beheld, this brief while of her reign,
Strong men one day make mouths at God, the next
Lie where his foes lie fallen? or since she came
Have ye seen raised up of them and cast down
But one or two that served her? Which of these,
Which of them all that looked on her and loved,
And men spake well of them, and pride and hope
Were as their servants—which of all them now
Shall men speak well of? How fared he the first
Hailed of his own friends and elect her lord,

Who gave her kinsmen heart and godless hope
By him to reign in her and wield this land,
Yet once with me took counsel and sought grace,
And suddenly God left him, and he stood
Brain-smitten, with no bride-bed now nor throne
To conquer, but go senseless to his grave,
The broken-witted Hamilton—what end,
Think ye, had this man, or what hope and hap
The next whose name met on men's lips with hers
And ballads mourned him in his love's sight slain,
Gordon, that in the dawn of her dark day
Rose northward as a young star fiery red,
Flashed in her face, and fell, for her own breath
Quenched him? What good thing gat they for her
sake,

These that desired her, yet were mighty lords,
Great in account of great men? So they twain
Perished; and on men meaner far than these
When this queen looked, how fared they? folk that
came

With wiles and songs and sins from oversea,
With harping hands and dancing feet, and made
Music and change of praises in her ear—
White rose out of the south, star out of France,
Light of men's eyes and love! yea, verily,
Red rose out of the pit, star out of hell,
Fire of men's eyes and burning! for the first
Was caught as in a chamber snare and fell
Smiling, and died with *Farewell, the most fair*
And the most cruel princess in the world—
With suchlike psalms go suchlike souls to God
Naked—and in his blood she washed her feet
Who sat and saw men spill it; and this reward
Had this man of his dancing. For the next,

On him ye know what hand was last year laid,
David, the close tongue of the Pope, the hand
That held the key of subtle and secret craft
As of his viol, and tuned all strings of state
With cunning finger ; not the foot o' the king
Before God's ark when Michal mocked at him
Danced higher than this man's heart for confidence
To bring from Babylon that ark again
Which he that touches, he shall surely die,
But not the death of Uzzah ; for thereon
God's glory rests not, but the shadow of death,
And dead men's bones within it : yet his trust
Was to lift up again and to relume
The tabernacle of Moloch, and the star
Of Remphan, figures which our fathers made,
That such as he might go before, and play
On timbrels and on psalteries and on harps,
On cornets and on cymbals ; and the Lord
Brake him ; and she being wroth at God took thought
How they that saw might call his place of death
The breach of David, and her heart waxed hot
Till she should make a breach upon his foes
As God on him, and with a dire new name
And a new memory quite put out that name
And memory of his slaying ; yea, all this land,
That hath seen evil of many men before
And sins of many years, hath seen til' now
No sin as hers, nor on her forefathers
Whose hands were red and their hearts hard hath seen
The note of such an evil as in her heart
Became a fire conceiving, and brought forth
The deed that in her hand was as a sword
New tempered in that fire ; for no such deed
Was this as all theirs who play false or slay,

Take gifts for whoredom or lay snares to kill,
But she gave gifts to hire her lover's knife
That it might pierce her husband ; even this land,
This earth whereof our living limbs are made,
This land renewed of God, this earth redeemed,
With all souls born therein to worship him
That call it mother, was the hire she gave
To fee the adulterer's hand when it should rise
Against her lord to slay him ; yea, all of you,
And each part of this kingdom, and each man
That but draws breath within her range of reign,
Were parcel of this hire, as counted coins
To make the sum up of her goodly gift.
And he that of their hands was bought and sold,
Her wedded husband, that had bowed his head
Before her worshipped idol—think ye not
That by her hand God gave him all his wage
Who was a less thing in his eyes than she
And viler than her service ? for the fire
Fell not from heaven that smote him, yet not less
Was kindled of God's wrath than of man's hate
And in a woman's craft his will put forth
To make her sin his judgment ; but of these,
The slain and slayer, the spoiler and the spoiled,
That each have lain down by her wedded side,
Which will ye say hath slept within her bed
A sleep more cursed, and from more evil dreams
Found a worse waking ? he that with a blast
Which rent the loud night as a cry from hell
Was blown forth darkling from her sheets, or he
That shared and soiled them till this day whereon
God casts him out upon the track of Cain
To flee for ever with uncleansed red hands
And seek and find not where in the waste world

To hide the wicked writing on his brow
Till God rain death upon him? for his foot,
Be sure, shall find no rest, his eye no sleep,
His head no covert and his heart no hope,
His soul no harbour and his face no light,
But as a hound the wolf that bleeds to death
God's wrath shall hunt him through the dark, and fear
Shall go before him as a cloud by day,
By night a fire, but comfort not his head
By day with shadow, nor with shine by night
Guide lest his foot be dashed against a stone,
But in fair heaven before the morning's face
Make his air thick with thunder, and put out
All lamplike eyes of stars that look on him
Till he lie down blind in the dust and die.
Or if God haply give his lightnings charge
They hurt him not, and bid his wind pass by
And the stroke spare him of the bolted cloud,
Then seeing himself cast out of all that live
But not of death accepted, everywhere
An alien soul and shelterless from God,
He shall go mad with hate of his own soul,
Of God and man and life and death, and live
A loathlier life and deadlier than the worm's
That feeds on death, and when it rots from him
Curse God and die. Such end have these that loved;
And she that was beloved, what end shall she?
What think ye yet would God have done with her,
Who puts her in our hand to smite or spare
That hath done all this wickedness? for these,
What were they but as shadows in the sun
Cast by her passing, or as thoughts that fled
Across her mind of evil, types and signs
Whereby to spell the secret of her soul

Writ by her hand in blood? What power had they,
What sense, what spirit, that was not given of her,
Or what significance or shape of life
Their act or purpose, formless else and void,
Save as her will and present force of her,
Gave breath to them and likeness? None of these
Hath done or suffered evil save for her,
Who was the spring of each man's deed or doom
And root for each of death, and in his hand
The sword to die by and the sword to slay.
Shall this be left then naked in the world
For him that will to stab our peace to death?
What blood is this drips from the point, what sign,
What scripture is enamelled on the blade?
Lo, this fair steel forged only to divide
This land from truth and cut her soul in twain,
To cleave the cords in sunder that hold fast
Our hope to heaven and tie our trust to God,
Here by the hilt we hold it, and well know
That if we break not, this now blunted edge
Being newly ground and sharpened of men's hands
That watch if ours will yet loose hold of it
Shall pierce our own hearts through. Ay, be ye sure,
If ye bid murder and adultery live,
They live not stingless; not a Scot that breathes,
No man of you nor woman, but hath part
In each her several sin and punishment
That ye take off from her. But what are these
That with their oaths or arms would fence her round
And hide her from God's lightnings? Know they not,
—Or if they know not, will ye too be blind?—
What end that Lord who hath bowed so many a head,
So many and mighty, of those her former friends,
Hath power to make of these men? Shall they stand,

Because they have done God service while they would,
And cease to serve him? or their good deeds past
Who served not God as Job forsooth for nought
Sustain their feet from falling? Strength nor craft,
Nor praise nor fear nor faith nor love of men,
Shall be for buckler to them, nor his name
A helm of vantage for the Douglas' head
If he make stiff against the yoke of God
Too proud a neck, that for the curb cast off
May feel the weight and edge that iron hath,
To check high minds and chasten; nor his wit
Nor subtle tongue shall be for Lethington
But as a pointless and unfeathered shaft
Shot heavenward without hurt, that falls again
In the archer's eye to pierce it; and his lips
That were so large of mockery when God spake,
By present organ of his works and wrath
And tongueless sound of justice audible,
Shall drink the poison of their words again
And their own mocks consume them; and the mouth
That spat on Christ, now pleading for his foes,
Be stricken dumb as dust. Then shall one say,
Seeing these men also smitten, as ye now
Seeing them that bled before to do her good,
God is not mocked; and ye shall surely know
What men were these and what man he that spake
The things I speak now prophesying, and said
That if ye spare to shed her blood for shame,
For fear or pity of her great name or face,
God shall require of you the innocent blood
Shed for her fair face' sake, and from your hands
Wring the price forth of her bloodguiltiness.
Nay, for ye know it, nor have I need again
To bring it in your mind if God ere now

Have borne me witness ; in that dreary day
When men's hearts failed them for pure grief and fear
To see the tyranny that was, and rule
Of this queen's mother, where was no light left
But of the fires wherein his servants died,
I bade those lords that clave in heart to God
And were perplexed with trembling and with tears
Lift up their hearts, and fear not ; and they heard
What some now hear no more, the word I spake
Who have been with them, as their own souls know,
In their most extreme danger ; Cowper Moor,
Saint Johnston, and the Craggs of Edinburgh,
Are recent in my heart ; yea, let these know,
That dark and dolorous night wherein all they
With shame and fear were driven forth of this town
Is yet within my mind ; and God forbid
That ever I forget it. What, I say,
Was then my exhortation, and what word
Of all God ever promised by my mouth
Is fallen in vain, they live to testify
Of whom not one that then was doomed to death
Is perished in that danger ; and their foes,
How many of these hath God before their eyes
Plague-stricken with destruction ! lo the thanks
They render him, now to betray his cause
Put in their hands to stablish ; even that God's
That kept them all the darkness through to see
Light, and the way that some now see no more,
But are gone after light of the fen's fire
And walk askant in slippery ways ; but ye
Know if God's hand have ever when I spake
Writ liar upon me, or with adverse proof
Turned my free speech to shame ; for in my lips
He put a word, and knowledge in my heart,

When I was fast bound of his enemies' hands
An oarsman on their galleys, and beheld
From off the sea whereon I sat in chains
The walls wherein I knew that I there bound
Should one day witness of him ; and this pledge
Hath God redeemed not ? Nay then, in God's name,
If that false word fell unfulfilled of mine,
Heed ye not now nor hear me when I say
That for this woman's sake shall God cut off
The hand that spares her as the hand that shields,
And make their memory who take part with her
As theirs who stood for Baal against the Lord
With Ahab's daughter ; for her reign and end
Shall be like Athaliah's, as her birth
Was from the womb of Jezebel, that slew
The prophets, and made foul with blood and fire
The same land's face that now her seed makes foul
With whoredoms and with witchcrafts ; yet they say
Peace, where is no peace, while the adulterous blood
Feeds yet with life and sin the murderous heart
That hath brought forth a wonder to the world
And to all time a terror ; and this blood
The hands are clean that shed, and they that spare
In God's just sight spotted as foul as Cain's.
If then this guilt shall cleave to you or no,
And to your children's children, for her sake,
Choose ye ; for God needs no man that is loth
To serve him, and no word but his own work
To bind and loose their hearts who hear and see
Such things as speak what I lack words to say.

FIRST CITIZEN

She shall not live.

SECOND CITIZEN

If by their mouths to-day
She be set free from death, then by our hands
She dies to-morrow.

VOICES IN THE CROWD

Nay, to fire with her !
Fire for the murderess ! cast her bones in the lake !
Burn, burn and drown ! She shall not live to-night.

SCENE VIII. *A Room in the Provost's House*

The QUEEN, ATHOL, *and* MORTON

QUEEN

I will not part from hence ; here will I see
What man dare do upon me.

ATHOL

Hear you not
How the cry thickens for your blood? this night
Scarce has time left to save you.

QUEEN

I will die.

MORTON

Madam, your will is no more now the sword
That cuts all knots in sunder : you must live,

And thank the force that would not give you leave
To give your foes the blood they seek to spill.
Here every hour's is as an arrow's flight
Winged for your heart ; if in these clamorous walls
You see this darkness by the sun cast out,
You will not see his light go down alive.

QUEEN

What men are ye then, that have made my life
Safe with your oaths, that walled it round with words,
Fenced it with faith and fortified it with air
Made of your breaths and honours ? When ye swore,
I knew the lie's weight on your lips, and took
My life into mine hand ; I had no thought
To live or ride among you but to death,
And whither ye have led me to what end
Nor I nor God knows better than I knew
Then when ye swore me safe ; for then as now
I knew your faith was lighter than my life,
And my life's weight a straw's weight in the wind
Of your blown vows. Pledge me your faith to this,
That I shall die to-night if I go forth
And if I stay live safe, and I will go
In trust to live, being here assured to die.

MORTON

We swore to save you as you swore again
To cast the traitor from you, and divorce
Your hand for ever from the blood on his ;
And with that hand you wrote to him last night
Vows of your love and constant heart till death
As his true wife to serve and cleave to him.
The boy that should have borne your letter lacked

Faith to be trusty to your faithless trust,
And put it in our hand.

QUEEN

Why, so I thought ;
I knew there was no soul between these walls
Of child or man that had more faith than ye
Who stand their noblest ; nor shall one soul breathe,
If here ye put not out my present life,
When I come back, that shall not burn on earth
Ere hell take hold of it.

MORTON

It is well seen,
Madam, that fear nor danger can pluck forth
Your tongue that strikes men mad with love or scorn,
Taunted or tempted ; yet it shall not wrest
Death from men's hands untimely ; what was sworn,
That you should live, shall stand ; and that it may,
To-night must you part hence ; this lord and I
Will bring you through to Holyrood afoot
And be your warders from the multitude
As you pass forth between us ; thence to Leith,
And there shall you take water and ere dawn
Touch at Burntisland, whence some twenty miles
Shall bear you to Lochleven and safe guard
On the Fife border ; he that has your charge
Is one not trusted more than tried of us,
Sir William Douglas, in whose mother's ward
At Kinross there shall you abide what end
God shall ordain of troubles : at this need
No kindlier guard or trustier could secure
The life we pluck out of the popular mouth
That roars agape to rend it. You must go.

QUEEN

Must I not too go barefoot? being your queen,
Ye do me too much grace: I should be led
In bonds between you, with my written sins
Pinned to my forehead, and my naked shame
Wrapt in a shameful sheet: so might I pass,
If haply I might pass at all alive
Forth of my people's justice, to salute
With seemly show of penance her chaste eyes
Whom ye have chosen for guard upon her queen
And daughter of the king her paramour,
Whose son being called my brother I must call,
Haply, to win her favour and her son's
And her good word with him as mediatress,
My father's harlot mother. Verily,
Ye are worthy guardians of fair fame, and friends
Fit to have care of reputation, men
That take good heed of honour; and the state
That hath such counsellors to comfort it
Need fear no shame nor stain of such reproach
As makes it shrink when with her lords' good will,
Advised of all tongues near her and approved,
A queen may wed the worthiest born of men
Her subjects, and a warrior take to wife
One that being widowed of his hand and help
Were such a thing as I am. From my lord
I held my kingdom; now my hand lacks his,
What queen am I, and what slaves ye, that throng
And threat my life with vassals, to make vile
Its majesty foregone with abject fear
Of my most abject? yet though I lack might
Save of a woman friendless and in bonds,
My name and place yet lack not, nor the state

And holy magic that God clothes withal
The naked word of king or queen, and keeps
In his own shadow, hallowed in his hand,
Such heads unarmed as mine, that men may smite
But no man can dishallow. In this faith,
Not to your faith I yield myself for fear,
But gladly to that God's who made of me
What ye nor no man mightier shall unmake,
Your queen and mistress. Lead me through my
streets

Whose stones are tongues now crying for my blood
To my dead fathers' palace, that hath oped
On many kings and traitors ; it may be
I shall not see these walls and gates again
That cast me out ; but if alive or dead
I come back ever to require my part
And place among my fathers, on my tomb
Or on my throne shall there stand graved for aye
The living word of this day's work and that
Which is to wreak me on it : and this town
Whence I go naked in mine enemies' hands
Shall be the flame to light men's eyes that read
What was endured and what revenged of me.

ACT V

THE QUEEN

TIME : FROM JULY 20, 1567, TO MAY 16, 1568

SCENE I. *Holyrood*MORTON *and* MAITLAND

MORTON

I KNOW not yet if we did well to lay
No public note of murder on the queen
In this our proclamation that sets forth
But the bare justice of our cause, and right
We had to move against her ; while her act
Stands yet unproven and seen but by surmise,
Though all but they that will not seem to know
May know the form and very life of it,
She hath a sword against us and a stay
In the English hearts and envious hands that wait
To strike at us, and take her name to gild
And edge the weapon of their evil will
Who only are our enemies, and stand
Sole friends of hers on earth ; for France, we see,
Will be no screen nor buckler for her, though
Fire were now lit to burn her body, or steel

Ground sharp to shear her neck : from Catherine's
mouth

Had Murray not assurance, and from him
Have we not word that France will stir no foot
To save or spill her blood? England alone
By her new-lighted envoy sends rebuke
Made soft and mixed with promise and with pledge
Of help and comfort to her against our part
Who by this messenger imperiously
Are taxed and threatened as her traitors ; this
Must we now answer with a brow as free
And tongue as keen, seeing how his queen in him
Desires the charge and wardship of our prince
Which we must nowise grant.

MAITLAND

For fear's sake, no,
Nor for her threats, which rather may pluck on
More present peril, of more fiery foot,
To the queen's life ; yet surer might we stand
Having the crown's heir safe and girt about
With foreign guard in a strange land, than here
Rocked in the roar of factions, his frail head
Pillowed on death and danger ; which once crushed,
And that thin life cut off, what hand puts forth
To take the crown up by successive right
But theirs that would even now dip violent hand
In the dear heart's blood of their kinswoman,
That it might take this kingdom by the throat
When she were slain ? and rather by our mean
Would they procure her slaying than by their own
Make swift the death which they desire for her,
And from our hands with craft would draw it down
By show of friendship to her and threat of arms

That menace us with mockery and false fear
Of her deliverance by their swords, whose light
Being drawn and shining in our eyes should scare
Our hearts with doubt of what might fall if she
Stood by their help rekingdomed, and impel
Even in that fear our hands to spill her blood
That lag too long behind their wish, who wait
Till seeing her slain of us they may rise up
Heirs of her cause and lineage, and reclaim
By right of blood and justice and revenge
The crown that drops from Stuart to Hamilton
With no more let or thwart than a child's life
Whose length should be their pleasure's : and with
these

Against our cause will England league herself
If yet the queen live prisoner of our hands
And these her kin draw swords for her ; but they,
Though England know not of it, nor have eye
To find their drift, would mix their cause with ours,
If from the queen's head living we should pluck
The royal office, and as next in blood
Instate them regents ; who would reign indeed
Rather ~~by~~ death's help if they might, and build
On her child's grave and hers their regency,
Than rule by deputation ; yet at need
Will be content by choice or leave of us
To take the delegated kingdom up
And lack but name of king : which being installed
I doubt they think not long to lack, or live
Its patient proxies ever. So the land,
Shaken and sundered, looks from us to these,
From these again to usward, and hears blown
Upon the light breath of the doubtful hour
Rumours of fear which swell men's hearts with wrath

To hear of southern wars and counsels hatched
That think with fright to shrink them up, and bind
Their blood's course fast with threats. Let England
know,

Her menace that makes cold no vein of ours
May heat instead the centre and the core
Of this land's pulse with fire, and in that flame
The life we seek not and the crown it wears
Consume together. France will rest our friend
Whether the queen find grace to live in bonds
Or bleed beneath our judgment ; he that comes
On errand thence to reconcile with us
Her kin that stand yet on the adverse part
Hath but in charge to do her so much good
As with our leave he may, and break no bond
That holds us firm in friendship ; if we will,
She may be held in ward of France, and live
Within the bound there of a convent wall
Till death redeem her ; but howe'er he speed
Who hath commission with what power he may
To make of our twain factions one such league
As may stand fast and perfect friend with France,
And in what wise by grace of us he may
To do our prisoner service and entreat
That grace to drop upon her, this main charge
He needs must keep, to hold allied in one
Scotland and France, and let our hand not plight
Fresh faith instead with England ; so for us
From France looks forth no danger though she die,
For her no help ; and these void English threats,
That bring no force to back them but their own
And find not us unfriended, do but blow
The embers that her life still treads upon
Which being enkindled shall devour it.

MORTON

Ay,

And each day leaves them redder from the breath
That through the land flies clamorous for her blood
From lips which boast to bear upon them laid
The live coal burning of the word that God
Gives them to speak against her ; the south towns
Are full of tongues that cry on our delay
To purge the land plague-stricken with her life ;
He first who never feared the face of man,
John Knox, and Craig his second, fill men's ears
With words as arrows edged and winged to slay ;
And all the wide-mouthed commons, and more loud
The women than their men, stretch their shrill throats
With cries for judgment on her : and herself,
As parcel of the faction for her death,
Takes part with them against her friends, and
swears

To the English envoy who was charged by stealth
To plead with her for mercy on her life
And privily persuade her, as we find,
To cast out Bothwell from her secret thought,
She would die first ere so divorce her soul
From faith and hope that hangs on him and feeds
Her constant spirit with comfort which sustains
His child alive within her ; for she thinks
Haply to move men's hearts even by the plea
That hardens them against her, being believed,
For the false fruit's sake of her fatal womb,
The seed of Bothwell, that with her should burn
Rather than bring forth shame, and in this land
Become a root of wars unborn and fire
Kindled among our children.

MAITLAND

Nay, this plea
Can be but sometime to defend her life
And put back judgment ; never could she think,
Though love made witless whom the world found
wise,
His seed might reign in Scotland.

MORTON

We are not
So barren of our natural brood of kings
As to be grafted from so vile a stock
Though he were now cut off who grows yet green
Upon the stem so shaken and pierced through
With cankers now that gnaw the grain away ;
Nor if the child whom whatsoe'er he be
We for the kingdom's comfort needs must seem
To take for true-begotten, and receive
As issued of her husband's kingly blood,
Should live not to take up with timely hand
The inheritance whereto we hold him born,
Should the crown therefore by his death derive
To the queen's kin, or hand of Hamilton
Assume the state and sway that slides from his :
His father hath a brother left alive,
The younger son of Lennox, who might put
More hopefully his nephew's title on
Than leave it for the spoil of hungry hands
That would make war upon our present state,
Unseat the rule of stablished things, unmake
The counsel and the creed whereby we stand,
And Scotland with us, firm of foot and free
Against the whole face of the weaponed world :

But this boy's crown shall be a golden ring
To hoop and hold our state and strength in one
And with the seemly name of king make sure
The rent bulk of our labouring commonwealth
And solder its flawed sides ; his right of reign
Is half our gift who reign in him, and half
His heritage of blood, whose lineal name
Shall not by note of usurpation strike
With strangeness or offence the world's wide ear
That hears a Stuart our prince's uncle crowned
In the dead child's succession, and this state
Made safe in him and stable to sustain
What chance abroad may range or breed at home
Of force to shake it.

MAITLAND

While the child lives yet,
A nearer hope than of his father's kin
Looks fairer on us ; yet in that life's wreck
This rope might hold at need.

MORTON

Ay, or we fall,
Who stand against the house of Hamilton
In this man's name ; his kinsman Ruthven, Mar,
Myself and Athol, who sustain his cause
Against their part alone.

MAITLAND

So do you well ;
Yet had I rather on the queen's appeal,
In her dead father's and her young child's name

Pleading for life, with proffer to resign
Her kingdom to the council's hands or his
Whom it may mark for regent, she might live
Even yet our titular queen, and in her name
The council govern of our trustiest heads,
While in safe ward of England or of France
Far from his kindred might her son grow safe,
And under strange and kindlier suns his strength
Wax ripe to bear a kingdom ; to this end
Save Bothwell's life I see no present let,
Who lives her shame and danger, but being slain
Takes off from her the peril of men's tongues
And her more perilous love that while he lives
It seems will never slacken till her life
Be made a prey for his, but in his death
Dies, or lives stingless after ; wherefore most
It now imports us to lay hand on him
And on that capture to proclaim divorce
Between them ere he die, as presently
His death should seal it and his blood subscribe.
So might she live and bring against our cause
No blame of men or danger.

MORTON

In my mind
Better it were to crown her son for king
And send her for safe keeping hence in guard
To live in England prisoner while we stand
As safe from her as blameless of her blood
Who reigning but in name on us should reign
Indeed on all our enemies' hopes, and turn
From us the hopeless hearts of half our friends
For the bare name's sake of her seeming reign
And mask of false-faced empire.

MAITLAND

As I think,
The main mind of the council will not bend
To any reason on our parts proposed
For her removal hence or titular reign,
Nor with the breath of our advice be blown
Beside their purpose ; if the queen consent
That her son's head be hallowed with her crown
And hers be bare before him, she shall live,
And that close record of her secret hand,
The proofs and scriptures in her casket locked
That seal her part in Darnley's bloodshedding,
Shall yet lie dumb in darkness ; else, I dread,
She shall be tried by witness in them writ
And each word there be clamorous on men's tongues
As the doom uttered of her present death.
And not more instant should her judgment be
Than her swift execution ; for they think,
I know, to find no safety while she lives ;
So that in no case shall she pass alive
Out of this realm while power is in their lips
To speed or stay her.

MORTON

They shall never think
To set before all eyes the whole tale forth
In popular proof and naked evidence
To plead against her ; Balfour, that betrayed
Her counsels to us, should then have done more scathe
Than ever he did service ; they must know
It were not possible to let this proof
Stand in the sun's sight, and such names be read

For partners of her deed and not her doom
As Huntley's and Argyle's. Have they not heard
What should suffice to show if there be cause
To seal some part yet of this secret up,
How dearly Bothwell held those privy scrolls
Preserved as witness to confound at need
The main part of his judges, and abash
Their sentence with their clear complicity
In the crime sentenced? yea, so dear a price
He set on these, that flying for life he sends
Dalglish his trustiest servant from Dunbar
To bring again from Balfour's hands to his
The enamelled casket in whose silver hold
Lay the queen's letters and the bond subscribed
Which at Craigmillar writ a live man dead.
This was a smooth and seasonable hour
For one of so soft spirit and tender heart
To send and seek for love of good days gone
A love-gift that his lady brought from France
To hold sweet scents or jewels; and the man
That to his envoy so delivered it
And sent our council warning to waylay
And where to intercept it, this was one
Meet for such trust and amorous offices,
Balfour, that yielding us the castle up
Yields likewise for a sword into our hands
To take by stroke of justice the queen's life
His witness with what words she tempted him
From her own lips, how lovingly and long,
To kill her husband; yet he durst not; then
How at her bidding he might well take heart,
She said, to do it; yet he stood fearful off;
Whereat she brake into a glimmering wrath
That called him coward and bade him live assured

If his tongue ever let this counsel forth
By her sure mean and suddenly to die.

MAITLAND

This were a sword to drink her life indeed
But that my hope is better of the lords
Than that their heart is fixed upon her death ;
And for the commons and their fiery tongue,
The loud-lipped pilot of their windy will,
This famine of their anger shall feed full
And slake its present need but with the spoil
Made of the piteous remnants of her faith
By the stout hand here of their friend Glencairn,
Who from this chapel of her palace rends
All holy ornament, grinds down with steel
The images whereon Christ dies in gold,
Unsanctifies her sovereign sanctuary,
Unmoulds her God and mints and marks him new,
And makes his molten chalices run down
Into strange shape and service ; this should ease,
Meseems, the hunger of the hate they bear
That creed for which they held her first in hate ;
And for the secular justice to be done
For his death's sake whom all these loathed alive,
It should content them that the trial has past
On those we held in hand, and by this test
The man whose marriage masque on that loud night
Was pretext for the queen to lie apart
From the near danger of her husband's bed,
Sebastian, stands approved as innocent
And no part of her purpose ; while the twain
Who bore the charge that was to load with death
The secret house, and to their master's hands

Consigned the mean of murder, have endured
The perfect proof of torture, and confessed
In the extreme pang of evidence enforced
The utmost of their knowledge.

MORTON

These may serve
To allay men's instant angers ; but much more
His face should profit us whom France detains
With suit and proffer from the queen-mother
With all their force and flower of war or craft
To help him to the crown of his own land
Or throne at least of regency therein,
If he will take but France for constant friend
And turn our hearts with his from England : this
Would Catherine give him for his friendship's sake
Who gives her none for all this, but his hope
Cleaves yet to England, though for fraud or fear
Again it fail him ; so being foiled and wroth,
He hath, she tells him, a right English heart,
And in that faith withholds him craftily
From his desired departure and return,
Which should be more of all this land desired
Than of himself ; this Elphinstone that comes
For him from Paris, in his master's name
To plead as in her brother's for the queen,
Bears but the name of Murray in his mouth,
Whose present eye and tongue, whose spirit and
mind,
Our need of him requires. When their intent
Shall by the lords in council be made known
To him that stands here for Elizabeth,
How in her name will he receive the word
That but from Murray's lip she thinks to hear,

And then determine with what large response
For peace or war she may resolve herself?

MAITLAND

If she shall find our council one in will
To shed by doom of judgment the queen's blood,
Even by Throgmorton's mouth I am certified
That she will call on France to strike with her
For this their sister's sake, and join in one
Their common war to tread our treason down ;
Or if she find not aid of France, from Spain
Will she seek help to hold our French allies
With curb and snaffle fast of Spanish steel,
For fear their powers against her lend us might
That would not lend against us ; she meantime,
While Philip's hand hath France as by the hair,
Shall loosen on us England, to redeem
That forfeit life which till the day of fight
Her trust is but in Murray to preserve,
Seeing he spake never word in English ear
Against this queen his sister.

MORTON

Being returned,
He shall bear witness if his heart be bent
Rather to this queen's love or that queen's fear
Than to the sole weal of his natural land
That hath more need he should take thought for her
Than one of these or the other. If the lords
Be purposed, as I guess, to bid the queen
Ere this month end make choice of death or life,
To live uncrowned and call her young son king
Or die by doom attainted, none but he

By her submission or her death must rise
Regent of Scotland ; and each hour that flits
With louder tongue requires him, and rebukes
His tardiness of spirit or foot to flee
By swift and private passage forth of France
To where our hearts wait that have need of him.

SCENE II. *Lochleven Castle*

The QUEEN and MARY BEATON

QUEEN

I would I knew before this day be dead
If I must live or die. Why art thou pale ?
It seems thou art not sad though I sit here
And thou divide my prison ; for I see
Thine eye more kindled and thy lip more calm
And hear thy voice more steadfast than it was
When we were free of body ; then the soul
Seemed to sit heavy in thee, and thy face
Was as a water's wearied with the wind,
Dim eye and fitful lip, whereon thy speech
Would break and die untimely. Do these walls
And that wan wrinkling water at their foot
For my sake please thee ? Thou shouldst love me well,
Or hate, I know not whether, if to share
The cup wherein I drink delight the lip
That pledges in it mine.

MARY BEATON

If I be pale,
For fear it is not nor for discontent

Here to sit bounded ; I could well be pleased
To shoot my thoughts no further than this wall
That is my body's limit, and to lead
My whole life's length as quiet as we sit
Till death fulfilled all quiet, did I know
There were no wars without nor days for you
Of change and many a turbulent chance to be
Whence I must not live absent.

QUEEN

Hast thou part,
Think'st thou, as in time past, predestinate
In all my days and chances ?

MARY BEATON

Yea, I know it.

QUEEN

If thou have grace to prophesy, perchance
Canst thou tell too how I shall fare forth hence,
If quick or dead ? I had rather so much know
Than if thou love or hate me.

MARY BEATON

Truly then
My mind forecasts with no great questioning
You shall pass forth alive.

QUEEN

What, to my death ?

MARY BEATON

To life and death that comes of life at last ;
I know not when it shall.

QUEEN

I would be sure
If our good guardian know no more than thou ;
I think she should ; yet if she knew I think
I should not long desire to know as much,
But the utmost thing that were of her foreknown
Should in mine eye stand open.

MARY BEATON

She is kind.

QUEEN

I would she were a man that had such heart ;
So might it do me service.

MARY BEATON

So it may.

QUEEN

How ? in her son ? Ay, haply, could I bring
Mine own heart down to feed their hearts with hope,
They might grow great enough to do me good.
I tell thee yet, I thought indeed to die
When I came hither. 'Tis but five weeks gone—
Five, and two days ; I keep the count of days
Here ; I can mind the smell of the moist air

As we took land, and when we got to horse
I thought I never haply might ride more,
Nor hear a hoof's beat on the glad green ground,
Nor feel the free steed stretch him to the way
Nor his flank bound to bear me : then meseemed
Men could not make me live in prison long ;
It were unlike my being, out of my doom ;
Free should I live, or die. Then came these walls
And this blind water shuddering at the sun
That rose ere we had ten miles ridden ; and here
The black boat rocked that took my feet off shore,
And set them in this prison ; and as I came
The honey-heavy heather touched my sense
Wellnigh to weeping ; I did think to die
And smell nought sweeter than the naked grave.
Yet sit we not among the worms and roots,
But can see this much—from the round tower here
The square walls of the main tower opposite
And the bare court between ; a gracious sight.
Yet did they not so well to let me live,
If they love life too ; I will find those friends
That found these walls and fears to fence me with
A narrower lodging than this seven feet's space
That yet I move in, where nor lip nor limb
Shall breathe or move for ever.

MARY BEATON

Do you think
You shall not long live bound ?

QUEEN

Impossible.
I would have violent death, or life at large ;

And either speedy. Were it in their mind
To slay me here and swiftly, as I thought,
Thou wouldst not here sit by their leave with me ;
They get not so much grace who are now to die
And could not need it ; yet I have heard it said
The headsman grants what sort of grace he may—
A grievous grace—to one about to bleed
That asks some boon before his neck lie down ;
Thy face was haply such a boon to me,
Being cradle-fellows and fast-hearted friends,
To see before I died, and this the gift
Given of my headsmen's grace ; what think'st thou ?

MARY BEATON

Nay,

That I know nought of headsmen.

QUEEN

Thou hast seen—

It is a sharp strange thing to see men die.

I have prayed these men for life, thou knowest, have
sent

Prayers in my son's and my dead father's name,
Their kings that were and shall be, and men say
One was well loved of the people, and their love
Is good to have, a goodly stay—and yet
I do not greatly think I fear to die.

I would not put off life yet ; if I live,
For one thing most shall these men pay me dear,
That I was ever touched with fear of death.
Thou hast heard how seeing a child on the island once
Strayed over from the shore, I cried to him
Through the pierced wall between five feet of stone
To bid my friends pray God but for my soul,

My body was worth little ; and they thought
I was cast down with bitter dread of heart ;
Please God, for that will I get good revenge.
I dream no more each night now on my lord,
And yet God knows how utterly I know
I would be hewn in pieces—yea, I think—
Or turned with fire to ashes for his sake :
Surely I would.

Enter LADY LOCHLEVEN

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Good morrow to your grace.

QUEEN

Good madam, if the day be good or no
Our grace can tell not ; while our grace had yet
The grace to walk an hour in the sun's eye
With your fair daughters and our bedfellows
About your battlements that hold us fast,
Or breathe outside the gateway where our foot
Might feel the terrace under, we might say
The morn was good or ill ; being here shut up,
We make no guesses of the sun, but think
To find no more good morrows.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Let your grace
Chide not in thought with me ; for this restraint,
That since your late scarce intercepted flight
Has been imposed upon me, from my heart
I think you think that I desired it not.

QUEEN

Ay, we were fools, we Maries twain, and thought
To be into the summer back again
And see the broom blow in the golden world,
The gentle broom on hill. For all men's talk
And all things come and gone yet, yet I find
I am not tired of that I see not here,
The sun, and the large air, and the sweet earth,
And the hours that hum like fire-flies on the hills
As they burn out and die, and the bowed heaven,
And the small clouds that swim and swoon i' the sun,
And the small flowers. Now should I keep these
things

But as sweet matter for my thoughts in French,
To set them in a sonnet ; here at home
I read too plain in our own tongue my doom,
To see them not, and love them. Pardon me ;
I would have none weep for me but my foes,
And then not tears. Be not more discontent
Than I to think that you could deem of me
As of one thankless ; who were thankless found,
Not knowing that by no will or work of yours
I sit suppressed thus from the sun ; 'tis mine,
My fault that smites me ; and my masters' will,
Not mine or yours it is, that for my fault
Devised this penance ; which on me wrought out
May fall again on them.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Madam, alas,
I came on no such errand to your grace
As lacked more words to make it sad than those

It was to speak ; and these have I put back
Too long and idly. Here are now at gate
Three messengers sent from the parliament
To speak with you.

QUEEN

With us to speak ? you know,
Nor chamberlain nor herald have we here
To marshal men before us. Let them come,
Whom all our kingdom left could keep not out
From this high presence-chamber. Stay ; I would
not
Be stricken unaware, nor find in you
That which I thought not ; it were out of kind,
Unwomanlike, to give me to their hands
Who came to slay me, knowing not why they came ;
Is it for that ?

LADY LOCHLEVEN

God's grace forbid it ! nay——

QUEEN

I ask if they bring warrant for my death ?
I have seen such things and heard, since leaves
bloomed last,
That this were no such marvellous thing to hear
But if this be, before I speak with them,
I will know first.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Let not your highness dread——

QUEEN

I do not bid you put me out of dread.
Have you not heard, and hear? The queen desires
To know of her born subject till she die
And keeper of her prison, if these men
Be come to slay her.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

They come to bid your grace——

QUEEN

Bid my grace do their bidding? that is like :
That I should do it were unlike. I must live,
I see, this some while yet. What men are these?

LADY LOCHLEVEN

The first, Sir Robert Melville ; then the lords
Ruthven and Lindsay.

QUEEN

Bid my first friend in,
While one friend may be bidden ; he, I think,
Can come but friendlike. [*Exit* LADY LOCHLEVEN.

What should these desire?

One head of theirs I swore last month to have,
That then beheld me, some day, if that hand
Whereon I swore should take not first my life.
And one the son of him that being nigh dead
Rose from his grave's edge to pluck down alive
A murdered man before him—what should he

Bring less than murder, being his father's son,
In such a hand as his that stabbed my friend ?

MARY BEATON

Perchance they come to take your crown, not life.

QUEEN

What, my name too? but till I yield it them,
They have but half the royal thing they hold,
The state they ravish ; and they shall not have
My name but with my life ; while that sits fast,
As in my will it sits, I am queen, and they
My servants yet that fear to take my life ;
For so thou seest they fear ; and I did ill,
That in first sight of present-seeming death
Made offer to resign into their hands
What here is mine of empire : I shall live,
And being no queen I live not.

Enter SIR ROBERT MELVILLE

Welcome, sir ;
 I have found since ever times grew strange with me
 Good friends of your good brother and yourself,
 And think to find. What errand have you here ?

SIR R. MELVILLE

Let not your majesty cast off the thought
Which calls me friend, though I be first to bear
An evil errand. 'Tis the council's mind
That you shall live, and in their hand the proofs
Shall die that plead against you——

QUEEN

Is this ill?

I know not well what proof that man could show
Would prove men honest that make war on faith,
Show treason trusty, bleach rebellion white,
Bid liars look loyal ; and much less I know
What proof might speak against me from their lips
Whose breath may kill and quicken evidence,
Or what good change of mind rebuke the lie
That lived upon them ; but that I must live,
And of their proofs unspotted, sounds not worse
Than if a friend had come to bear me word
That I must die belied.

SIR R. MELVILLE

Upon these terms

Are they content for you to live in ward ;
That you yield up as with free hand the crown
And right of kingdom to your son, who straight
At Stirling shall receive it from their hands ;
Else shall your grace be put to trial, and bear
The doom ensuing, with what of mortal weight
May hang upon that sentence.

QUEEN

Sir, methought

This word of doom for shame's sake now was dead
Even in their mouths that first it soiled, and made
Even shamelessness astonished ; not again
We thought to hear of judgment, we that are,
While yet we are anything, and yet must be,
The voice which deals, and not the ear which takes,

Judgment. God gave man might to murder me,
Who made me woman, weaker than a man,
But God gave no man right, I think, to judge,
Who made me royal. Come then, I will die ;
I did not think to live. Must I die here ?

SIR R. MELVILLE

Madam, my errand——

QUEEN

Ay, sir, is received
Here in my heart ; I thank you ; but you know
I had no hope before ; yet sounds it strange
That should not sound, to die at such men's hands,
A queen, and at my years. Forgive me, sir ;
Me it not comforts to discomfort you,
Who are yet my friend—as much as man on earth—
If any, you—that come to bid me die.

SIR R. MELVILLE

Be not cast down so deep : I have an errand
From the English queen, your friend, and here en-
sheathed
By my sword's secret side, for your fair hand
A letter writ from her ambassador
Praying you subscribe what thing my comrades will,
Since nought whereto your writing was compelled
Can hang hereafter on you as a chain
When but for this bond written you stand free.

QUEEN

Ay, I know that : how speaks Elizabeth ?

SIR R. MELVILLE

She bids you at all times account of her
As a sure friend and helpful ; has, I know,
Indeed no mind to fail you.

QUEEN

This your comfort
 Is no small comfort to me ; I had rather
 Be bounden to her than any prince alive.
 Is it her counsel then that I subscribe
 My traitors' writing? I will do it. But, sir,
 Of those that sit in state in Edinburgh
 Which was it chose you for my comforter ?
 I know my lord of Morton would send none ;
 It was the secretary ?

SIR R. MELVILLE

Madam, the same.

QUEEN

Did I not well then, think you, when I cast
This body of mine between him and the swords
That would have hewn his body? I did think
He was my friend. Bid now mine enemies in,
And I will sign what sort of shame they will,
And rid them hence.

Enter LINDSAY *and the younger* RUTHVEN

'Tis five weeks gone, my lord,
[*To LINDSAY.*

Since last we looked on you ; for you, fair sir,
[To RUTHVEN.

A year I think and four good months are sped
Since at that father's back whose name you bear
I saw your face dashed red with blood. My lords,
Ye come to treat with us ambassadors
Sent from our subjects ; and we cannot choose,
Being held of them in bonds from whom ye come,
But give you leave to speak.

LINDSAY

Thus, briefly, madam.
If you will live to die no death by doom,
This threefold bond of contract that we bring
Requires your hand ; wherein of your free will
First must you yield the crown of Scotland up
To your child's hand ; then by this second deed
The place and name of regent through this realm
To the earl of Murray shall you here assign,
Or, if he list not take this coil in hand,
Then to the council ; last, this deed empowers
The lords of Mar and Morton with myself
To set the crown upon the young king's head.
These shall you sign.

QUEEN

These I shall sign, or die.
But hear you, sirs ; when hither you brought these,
Burned not your hearts within you by the way
Thinking how she that should subscribe was born
King James's daughter ? that this shameful hand,
Fit to sustain nor sword nor staff o' the realm,

Hath the blood in it of those years of kings
That tamed the neck and drove with spurs the sides
Of this beast people that now casts off me ?
Ay, this that is to sign, no hand but this
Throbs with their sole inheritance of life
Who held with bit and bridle this bound land
And made it pace beneath them. What are ye
That I should tell you so, whose fathers fought
Beneath my fathers ? Where my grandsire fell
And all this land about him, were there none
That bore on Flodden, sirs, such names as yours,
And shamed them not ? Heard no men past of lords
That for the king's crown gave their crown of life
For death to harry ? Did these grieve or grudge
To be built up into that bloody wall
That could not fence the king ? Were no dead found
Of that huge cirque wherein my grandsire lay
But of poor men and commons ? Yea, my lords,
I think the sires that bred you had not heart
As men have writ of them, but sent to fight
For them their vassals visored with their crests,
And these did well, and died, and left your sires
That hid their heads for ever and lived long
The name and false name of their deeds and death.
How should their sons else, how should ye, being born,
If born ye be, not bastards, of those lords
Who gat this lying glory to be called
Loyal, and in the reek of a false field
To fall so for my fathers—how, I say,
Dare sons of such come hither, how stand here,
From off the daughter's head of all those kings
To pluck the crown that on my fathers' heads
Ye say they died to save ? I will not sign ;
No, let some Flodden sword dip in my blood ;

Here I sit fast, and die. Good friend that was,
[To SIR R. MELVILLE.
Tell my great sister that you saw my hand
Strive and leave off to sign ; I had no skill
To shape false letters.

RUTHVEN

Madam, no man here
But knows by heart the height of your stout words
And strength of speech or sweetness ; all this breath
Can blow not back the storm yourself raised up
Whose tempest shakes the kingdom from your hand,
And not men's hate. You have been loved of men ;
All faith of heart, all honour possible,
While man might give, men gave you. Now, those
deeds
Which none against your will enforced you do
Have set that spirit against you in men's minds
That till you die (as then your memory may)
Nor your fair beauty nor your fiery heart
Can lay with spells asleep.

SIR R. MELVILLE (*aside*)

I pray you, madam,
Think on mine errand.

QUEEN

Wherefore should I sign ?
If I be queen that so unqueen myself,
What shall it profit me to give my foes
This one thing mine that hallows me, this name,
This royal shadow ? If I be no queen,

Let me bleed here ; as being uncrowned I know
That I shall die of all your promises.

LINDSAY

We came not, madam, to put force on you,
And save your life by violence ; but take note,
 [Laying his hand on her arm.]
As in this hand your own is fast, and hath
No power till mine give back its power again
To strive or sign, so fast are you in ward
For life or death of them that bid you live
And be no queen, or die.

QUEEN

I thank you, sir,
That of your love and courtesy have set
This knightly sign upon my woman's flesh
For proof if I be queen or no, that bear
Such writing on my body of men's hands
To seal mine abdication. Sirs, read here ;
What need I sign again ? here may men see
If she be queen of Scotland on whose arm
Are writ such scriptures as I wist not yet
Men's eyes might read on any woman born.
Yet will I write, being free, to assure myself
This is my hand indeed that wears the sign
Which proves it vassal to the stronger. Sirs,
Take back your papers ; and albeit, my lord,
The conquest you have made of me henceforth
Lift up your heart with pride, I pray you yet
Boast not yourself on women overmuch,
Lest being their conqueror called and praised for that
Men call you too their tyrant. Once and twice

Have we grasped hands ; the third time they shall
cross

Must leave one cold for ever. Nay, I pray,
Who may command not surely, yet I pray,
Speak not, but go ; ye have that ye came for ; go,
And make your vaunt to have found so meek a thing
As would yield all, and thank you.

[*Exeunt* LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, and SIR R. MELVILLE.

Hast thou read
Of sick men healed with baths of children's blood ?
I must be healed of this my plague of shame,
This sickness of disgrace they leave with me,
Bathing in theirs my body.

MARY BEATON

In such streams
You have washed your hands already.

QUEEN

What, in war ?
Ay, there I have seen blood shed for me, and yet
Wept not nor trembled ; if my heart shrink now,
It is for angry pity of myself
That I should look on shame.

MARY BEATON

What shame, my queen ?

QUEEN

Thy queen ? why, this, that I, queen once of Scots,
Am no more now than thine. Call back the lords ;
I will unsign their writing, and here die ;
It were the easier end.

MARY BEATON

It is your will—
Forgive me, madam—on this cause again
To grapple with Lord Lindsay?

QUEEN

True, not yet ;
Thou thought'st to make me mad, remembering that ;
But it hath made me whole. My wits are sound,
Remembering I must live. When I have slept,
Say I would gladly see the kindlier face
Again of our dear hostess with her son
To put those angry eyes out of my sight
That lightened late upon me ; say, being sad,
And (if thou wilt) being frightened, I must find
The comfortable charities of friends
More precious to me. 'Tis but truth, I am fain,
Being tired, to sleep an hour : mine eyes are hot ;
Where tears will come not, fire there breeds instead,
Thou knowest, to burn them through. Let me lie
down ;
I will expect their comforts in an hour. [Exeunt.

SCENE III. *Holyrood*

MAITLAND and SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON

THROGMORTON

Why would your council give no ear to me
Ere they rode hence so hot to crown their prince ?
Why hear not first one word ?

MAITLAND

One threat the more
From your queen's lips bequeathed by rote to yours,
Or one more promise? If we run her course,
This queen will leave us in the briars, we know,
There to lie fast or labour till the thorns
Have rent our flesh and raiment.

THROGMORTON

Sir, take thought
If help were sent not at the siege of Leith,
When France had grasped you by the throat, and sea
To land gave battle, from that sovereign's hand
Whom now ye trust not.

MAITLAND

Ay, for her own ends
She cast the French out and flung back their power
Which here was deadly to her, and of that deed
Had recompense with surety : but what aid
Must we now look for of her, on whose will
Hang all our enemies' hopes? I would I had been
Banished seven years my country, and your queen
On that condition had but as a friend
Dealt freely with us. Let her now proclaim,
Her own seed failing, this our prince her heir,
And England shall no less have care of him
Than we his lineal servants ; else, if hence
We yield him to your keeping, men will say
We have given our natural master to be kept
As among wolves a sheep, and made our hope
The fosterling of danger : and small trust

Should we put in her that has newly dealt
By secret message to subvert our state,
We know, with those indeed of our queen's kin
From whose report we know it.

THROGMORTON

What have they said ?

MAITLAND

That you brought proffers of her aid and love
To incite their arms, to quicken the slow snake
Whose sting lies cold yet in their policy,
But watched and warmed of her with hand and eye
The perfect poison should put forth, and thrust
At once the hot and cloven tongue of war
Even in our face and bosom ; but for fear,
It may be, or being yet at heart's root Scots,—
For this or that cause, through false heart or true,
So is it, that in doubt of your good mind
Toward them or Scotland, in whose breast you sought
To make the mutual swords of her own sons
Clash as they crossed once more, drinking her blood,
They sent us word of all your embassy.

THROGMORTON

But you, whate'er these thought or feigned to think,
Think no such foolish evil as fools may,
Deem not of England as the Scot who deems
She hath no will, no line of life, no hope,
No thought but Scotland's ruin, and our queen
No sense of aught here done—her sister's doom,
The people's rage, the council's purpose—nought

But where to find in these a guileful mean
To strike at Scotland? why, these fears are old,
White-bearded dreams, suspicions long grown grey,
Dangers and doubts toothless and eyeless now
That fright nor babe nor dotard ; and your thought
Finds room for such? What profit should she have
To turn your swords against each other's throats
And pick some privy chance of vantage up
That fell between your factions at her feet?
Such chance indeed of vantage might there fall
For your own queen, who nowise has been slow
To nurse the chance and wait on it and serve,
From strifes rekindled and requickening claims
Set each at each in England, whence or craft
Or force might filch or seize for Scotland's sake
Some no less jewel than her eye ere now
Was fixed so fast on, even the crown that hangs
In doubt yet of unsure inheritance,
As hangs not yours for us to pluck at, who,
Reign whoso may when this queen's life is quenched,
In Scotland shall reign never.

MAITLAND

That I know,
And this no less ; that he who reigns shall reign
Never by right of England's leave or love,
Her ward or servant ; as, this queen removed,
Haply ye hope her lineal heir might be,
And in that hope work with these Hamiltons
To strike at us in Mary's name, and pluck
Death from our hands upon her ; you, your queen,
And they her kinsfolk, all ye seek her death ;
No word but of her freedom in your mouths,

No end than this less looked for in your hearts.
Speak to the council as but now to me,
Defy them in her cause, not all the world
For three days' space shall save her.

THROGMORTON

Nay, not we

Desire the queen's death at your hand provoked,
But here from Tullibardine's mouth I know
Her kin at secret heart desire no less,
And will ye but allow their house its right
By heritage to reign, no need, they say,
To take more care for her, who privily
May be put out of life, and no man more
In that dead name be troubled ; and again,
If they with no such promise being assured
Shall not join hands with you, and England then
Shall bring the queen back whom ye spared to slay,
Ye are lost and they not winners. Therefore is it
That of Lord Mar and of yourself I seek
Help for the queen's deliverance, who being dead
Can profit no man but your foes and ours
That love not England more than they love you
Nor you than they love England : shall not both
With their own cause take part ?

MAITLAND

It is too late ;
What part should we take with you, to what end,
Since all the council knows your traffic now
With their chief foes, and how being there betrayed
You can but bring us such a friendship back
As they would none of ?

THROGMORTON

Sir, if yet you fear,
If you suspect yet that our queen desires
To speed the death of yours or make it sure
By pleading for her, or by threat of war
Denounced for her sake, let this letter be
The seal and warrant of our single heart,
Wherein she threatens war—but smile not yet—
If in his mother's name for him discrowned
Ye crown the child that has but wailed one year.
This should the lords have seen ; but even for doubt
Lest it should set their spirits on such fire
As but her blood shed presently could slake,
And this be deemed its aim indeed at heart
And privy purpose of her hand who writ,
Your eye alone must read that reads it now
And the lord Murray's ; for they know that send
And with it send me this for secret charge,
They know the truth and heat of fiery will
That urges our queen's heart upon this war,
And for no end but for her sake who sits
Held fast in bonds of her own subjects born,
And with her all the majesty on earth
That walks with monarchs, and no king alive
But wears some shameful parcel of her chain.

MAITLAND

Though this be truth, yet they that hold it false
Will join in wrath with them that hold it true,
Even for the threat's sake and for shame, will join
To write red answer in the slain queen's blood
Back to the queen that threatens. Nay, herself

Who sits in bonds yet of us will not yield
To come forth singly safe, nor give consent
That Bothwell should fare worse than she, or have
More harm or danger ; and being thus incensed,
A three-edged weapon in the council's hand
Is drawn to smite at need, a treble charge
Whereon to impeach her ; on that statute first
Made of this land's religion seven years since,
Which though she signed not, yet its breach in her
Shall stand for guilt before them ; and thereto
Shall she be challenged of incontinence
With more than Bothwell, who by noteless nights
Have made her bed adulterous ; and of each
The proof that seals her shame in him, they say,
Lies in their hand ; last, of her murdered lord
Their warrant cries against her ; and from these
No man may think to quit her nor secure,
Save he that here comes timeliest for such toil
As none beside may take upon his hand.

Enter MURRAY

Welcome, my lord, and to a land that lacks
As never yet it lacked or looked for you.
What comfort bring you for her wounds from France
Besides that present help of hand and head
We heard returned an hour since ?

MURRAY

Sir, thus much ;

All of our faith in France will in our cause
Live or die fighting ; gold and men in arms
Will flow thence on us in full stream and free
If Scotland set but open hand or breast

To greet them coming ; they will buy our love
At what best price they may.

THROGMORTON

But you, my lord,
That have loved England ever, and that know
The worth and unworth weighed of either friend,
French faith or English, will not surely buy
With heavy hate of England the light love
That France and fraud would sell you, nor for this
Cast off the fortune and the peace unborn
That may bind fast in one strong ring of sea
Two jewels become one jewel, one such land
As from the stout fort of a single heart
Fixed like a sea-rock might look forth and laugh
Upon the under wars of all the world,
And see not higher the heads of kingdoms risen
Than of small waves in summer ? will you pluck
This hope out of the hopeful hand of time
Ere he can gather, this good fruit that grows
On the green present branch of time's grey tree
To feed the future where the hungry past
Could get but blood for bread, and with bare steel
Died starved and smitten ?

MURRAY

Sir, when I came in
By secret flight from France, out of the guard
Wherein I lived inwalled with watch of men
That the court set about me to withhold
My foot from England—when an English boat
Had borne me oversea by secret night

From privy port to port, at the long last
I saw your queen's face darken on mine own
As on a servant favour-fallen, that came
To take rebuke and speak not ; in her speech
I found no note of favour, no good word,
Nor honour such as late in France I found
And finding fled from : sharply with strange eyes
She glanced against me ; taxed me with the bonds
Wherein men held my sister ; half a threat
Was all her promise : I returned but this,
I would be still a Scotsman, and this land
I had more mind to serve and do her good
Than either of these queens ; so parted thence
Unfriendlie, yet with no breach openly
Proclaimed of friendship ; and being here, my mind
Is yet to serve no mistress but alone
This earth my bones were bred of, this kind land
Which moulded me and fostered ; her strong milk
Put manhood in my blood, and from my heart
If she that nurtured need it now to drink
I think not much to shed it. If those lords
In whom her power now stands shall with one mouth
Bid me put on this weight of regency,
For no man's fear shall I deny them ; she,
Your queen that threatens me with ignominy
If I obey their choice and call, must know
That to God only and my heart, those twain
That are one eye to know me and to judge,
Will I refer it ; and of them being known
That with pure purpose and no soiled intent
I take this charge up, I will bear it through
To the right end. Yet ere my mind be fixed,
I will behold her that was queen, and see
How sits the spirit within her ; but howe'er,

Till Bothwell in our hands lie trapped and dead
She must not pass forth free ; and we will hold
No traffic for the bear's skin merchant-like
Before the bear be caught ; but if your queen
Proclaim against us therefore war, be sure
We will not lose our lives, yield up our lands,
And bear repute of rebels through the world,
Who might, how loth soe'er, in all men's eyes
Make our cause clear as righteousness ; the proofs
Which in our hands lie darkling yet, but bear
The perfect witness of those ill deeds past
That bring her thus in danger of our doom
And righteous peril of all-judging law,
Must to the world's eye nakedly set forth
What cause is hers, and ours ; when if I stand
In the king's likeness of the state elect,
To him in me shall all knees bend and hearts
Kneel subjected ; for them that hold apart,
No head shall stand of any Hamilton
That shall not bow before my sword or me.

SCENE IV. *Lochleven Castle*

The QUEEN and GEORGE DOUGLAS

QUEEN

Will he be here to-day ? Alas, my friend,
I made my hope of this till he should come,
And now he comes I would not look on him.
I know not what put hope into my fear
That this your mother's and my father's son
Should do me good for evil.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Madam, I think
The mind can be but good that marshals him
To your fair presence ; nay, though even his soul
Were damned so deep as to desire your death,
He durst not come to show us his purpose here
Who were not chosen for murderers at his hire
But guards and servants that would shed their lives
Ere yours should look on danger.

QUEEN

That we know,
And have no better wage than love to give,
Which more to give we grudge not, being so poor,
Than from your queen's hands you disdain to take :
But what knows he ? for aught our brother knows,
Your mother and yourself are envious guards
That hate me for my faith as for my fault
And hold your hands but till he bids you slay
Or yield me to my slayers. Ah my last knight,
You shall do well to leave me at my need ;
He will command you ; when this brother knows
I am not hated, think you then my friend
Shall not be chidden from me ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

When my life
Is bidden from my body ; not till then
Shall I be found obedient.

Enter LADY LOCHLEVEN

QUEEN

Be but wise,
And wisdom shall not let you disobey.
Our noble hostess, you have borne a son,
I dare not say more noble, but I dare
More simple than his elders ; one whose heart
Stands fast when fortune stands not, and requires,
As other men do power and glory and gold,
No guerdon but the memory writ of him
To have been most true when fortune was most false,
And most to have loved whom she most hated : this
Shall not of them be written. Come you not
To bring one to me that shall never sin
As he by faith and folly ? I would say
Of my great brother and your kingly son
Nothing but good ; yet can nor you nor I
Say that he loves me and my fallen estate
More than the power he comes to take from me,
Or rather from their hands that ere he came
Had rent it out of mine. Nay, look not sad ;
You should be merrier than my mother might,
Were she now living.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

God shall witness me
What joy I have of such a guest, or pride
To be so stricken, madam, of your tongue
Chastising me for triumph ; if my heart
Exalt itself for this day's sake, God knows,
Who hears you mock me.

QUEEN

Nay, I said no scorn ;
I had rather need to pray you in his name
Scorn not at me. Let him come in ; I know
What ceremony my masters should put on
Were but to mock their servant.

Enter MURRAY, ATHOL, *and* MORTON

Sirs, you twain
That brought me two months since between you safe
Out of the town by night that sought my blood
Myself bid welcome ; but she is not I
That in this presence should make welcome here
My father's son ; nor shall my speech usurp
For modesty that office : yet indeed
I am glad, my lord, to see your face, that must
Bring comfort, or an end of all this life
That yet needs comfort.

MURRAY

What I may, I will ;
Yet haply shall you find not in my words
Or death or comfort ; as you give them heed,
Shall they prove comfortable or deadly. Sirs,
I have that to speak and hear that but requires
The Lady Mary's ear and mine ; I pray you,
Take not offence that I crave leave to say
We must for some space lack your company.

MORTON

My lord, the land that puts her trust in you
Bids us obey, well knowing that love nor fear
Shall bend you from her service.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

Sir——

MURRAY

Your will ?

LADY LOCHLEVEN

I am no parcel of the sovereign state
That gives you of its greatness, nor have right
To speak commandingly ; yet ere I go
I would desire you by what name I may,
Look on this lady with such equal eyes
As nor the wrath and hate of violent men,
Nor sense of evil done to this land's peace
By her mischance and evil counsellors,
Nor (what I would not fear to find in you)
Desire of rule with pride of station, may
Divert to do her wrong or glance aside
From the plain roadway of that righteousness
Whose name is also mercy. This at least
Surely by me may be of you required,
That in this house no wrong by word or act,
By deed or threat, may touch her.

MURRAY

Be assured

No wrong shall ever touch her by my hand ;
And be content to know it.

QUEEN

Madam, these lords
Know that I thought ere this to find of you
A mediatress between me and your son ;
I have my hope, and with a humble heart
I take your intercession thankfully.

[Exeunt all but the QUEEN and MURRAY.]

MURRAY

I would I had another cause to speak
Or you to listen, than this bitter theme
That brings us back together, though for that
I had died a foreign man.

QUEEN

I thought not, sir,
When we last parted ere the break of spring,
To meet you thus in summer ; but these months
Have wrought things stranger on me.

MURRAY

Say, yourself
Have made of them more strange and perilous use
Than is the fruit they bear. I am not come
To flatter with you ; that I seek your death
I think you fear not, yet should surely know
The man that seeks were now more like to speed
Than he that would preserve it. Heaven and earth
As with the tongue of one same law demand
Justice against you ; nor can pity breathe
But low and fearful, till the right be weighed

That must in pity's spite and fear's be done,
Or this land never thrive. For that right's sake
And not for hatred or rebellious heart
Do men require that judgment pass on you
And bring forth execution ; the broad world
Expects amazedly when we that rule
Shall purge this land of blood, which now looks red
In the world's eye, and blushing not for shame
Blushes with bloodshed ; in men's general mouths
The name of Scot is as a man's attain
Of murderous treason, or as his more vile
That for base heart and fear or hire of gold
With folded hands watches the hands that slay
Grow great in murder ; and God's heavy doom
Shall be removed not from us, nor his wrath,
Well may we fear, shall lighten, till the deed
That reeks as recent yet toward the fair heavens
Be thoroughly cleansed with judgment.

QUEEN

Must I too

Bleed to make Scotland clean of baser blood
Than this she seeks of mine ?

MURRAY

If you shall die,
Bethink you for what cause, and that sole thought
Shall seal your lips up from all pride of plea
That would put in between your deed and doom
The name of queen to cover you. No age
That lived on earth red-handed without law
Ever let pass in peace and unchastised

Such acts as this that yet in all men's ears
Rings as a cry unanswered. When your lord
Lay newly murdered, and all tongues of friends
Were loud in prayer to you to save your name
From stain of accusation, and yield up
That head to judgment which the whole world held
Blood-guilty, first with subtle stretch of time
Did you put back the trial, then devise
To make it fruitless save of mockery ; next,
I cannot say for shame what shame foregone
Moved you to put upon this loathing land
That great dishonour to behold and bear
The man your lover for its lord, and you,
Queen of all Scots and thrall of one most base,
While yet the ring was from his finger warm
That sealed it first, and on his wedded hand
The young blood of your husband, ere the print
Had cooled of marriage or of murder, you
In the hot circle of his amorous arms
A new-espoused adulteress. Will you say
You were enforced or by false counsels bent
To take him to your bosom ? In what eye
Was not the foregone commerce of your loves
As bare as shame ? what ear had heard not blown
His name that was your sword and paramour,
Whose hand in yours was now as steel to slay,
Now as a jewel for love to wear, a pledge
Hot from your lips and from your husband's heart ?
Who knew not what should make this man so proud
That none durst speak against him of your friends
But must abide for answer unaware
The peril of the swords that followed him ?
Went he not with you where you went, and bade
Men come and go, do this or do not, stand

Or pass as pleased him, ere that day had risen
Which gave the mockery of a ravished bride
To the false violence of his fraudulent rape
That hardly she could feign to fear, or hide
The sweetness of the hour when she might yield
That which was his before, and in men's eyes
Make proof of her subjection? Nay, forbear;
Plead not for shame that force was put on you
To bear that burden and embrace that shame
For which your heart was hungry; foe nor friend
Could choose but see it, and that the food desired
Must be but mortal to you. Think on this,
How you came hither crowned these six years gone
In this same summer month, and with what friends
Girt round about and guarded with what hopes,
And to a land how loving; and these years,
These few brief years, have blown from off your
boughs

All blossom of that summer, though nor storm
Nor fire from heaven hath wrecked nor wind laid
low

That stately tree that shadowed a glad land,
But now being inly gnawn of worms to death
And made a lurking-place for poisonous things
To breed and fester at its rotten root,
The axe is come against it. None save you
Could have done this, to turn all hearts and hands
That were for love's sake laid before your feet
To fire and iron whetted and made hot
To war against you. No man lives that knows
What is your cause, and loathes not; though for
craft

Or hope of vantage some that know will seem
To know not, and some eyes be rather blind

Than see what eyeless ignorance in its sleep,
If but it would, must needs take note of ; none
Whose mind is maimed not by his own mere will
And made perforce of its own deed perverse
Can read this truth awry. What have you done ?
Men might weep for you, yea, beholding it
The eyes of angels melt ; no tide of tears
Could wash from hand or soul the sinful sign
That now stands leprous there ; albeit God knows
Myself for very pity could be glad
By mine own loss to ransom you, and set
Upon your soul again the seal of peace
And in your hand its empire ; but your act
Has plucked out of men's hearts that fain would
keep

The privilege of mercy ; God alone
Can lose not that for ever, but retains
For all sins done that cry for judgment here
The property of pity, which in man
Were mere compliance and confederacy
With the sin pardoned ; so shall you do best,
Being thus advised, to entertain the hope
Of nothing but God's mercy, and henceforth
Seek that as chiefest refuge ; for in man
There shall no trust deliver you, nor free
Body nor soul from bonds. Weep not for that ;
But let your tears be rather as were hers
That wept upon the feet of God, and bought
With that poor price her pardon.

QUEEN

So should I,
If grief more great may buy it than any of theirs

That had sinned more than I ; nay, such have been
And have been pardoned. I have done ill, and
given

My name for shame to feed on, put mine honour
Into mine enemies' keeping, made my fame
A prey and pasture for the teeth of scorn ;
I dare not say I wist not by what mean
I should be freed of one that marred my life,
Who could by no mean else be quit of him
Save this blind way of blood ; yet men there were
More wise than I, men much less wronged of him,
That led me to it and left me ; but indeed
I cite not them to extenuate by strange aid
Mine own rash mird and unadvisedness
That brought forth fruit of death ; yet must you
know

What counsels led me by the hand, and whence
My wrath was fostered ; and how all alone,
How utterly uncomforted, and girt
With how great peril, when the man was slain,
I stood and found not you to counsel me,
And no man else that loved ; and in such need
If I did ill to seek to that strong hand
Which had for me done evil, if evil it were
To avenge me of mine enemy, what did they
That by their hands and voices on his side
Put force on me to wed him ? yet I say not
I was indeed enforced ; I will not mock
With one false plea my penitent heart, nor strive
With words to darken counsel, nor incense
By foolishness your wisdom, to provoke
A judgment heavier than I wait for ; nay,
You have not said that bitter thing of me
That I may dare unsay ; what most I would,

I must deny not ; yet I pray you think,
Even as might God, being just, what cause I had,
What plea to lighten my sore load of sin,
Mismated and miscotinselled, and had seen
Of my sad life not wholly nineteen years
When I came hither crowned ; as yet would God
Your head, my brother, had endured for mine
That heaviness of honour, and this hand
The weight of Scotland, that being laid in mine
Has fallen and left it maimed, and on my brows
A mark as his whose temples for his crime
Were ringed with molten iron. Take them now,
Though but for pity of me that pray you take,
And bear them better than I did ; for me,
Though no plea serve me in the sight of man
Nor grace excuse my fault, I am yet content,
If I may live but so much time in bonds
As may suffice for God to pardon me,
Who shall not long put off to pardon, then
Shut eyes and sleep to death.

MURRAY

I had thought to-night
To speak no more with you, but let that hope
Which only in God's name I gave you bear
What fruit it might with prayer and watching ; yet
Take comfort, and assure yourself of life,
And, if it may be, honour ; one of these
I may take on me to redeem, and one
So as I may will I preserve from death
Dealt of men's tongues that murder it ; but you,
Keep these things in your heart ; that if you raise
Within this realm a faction, or devise

To break these bonds, I shall not keep an hour
This power I have to save you ; nor shall keep,
If France or England be by word of yours
Stirred up to strike at our frail peace ; nor yet
If you shall cleave to him that should for shame
As from this land be cast out from your heart ;
But if toward God your faults be faithfully
In good men's sight acknowledged, and that life
You led with your false lord and all sins past
Loathed and lamented, and in days to be
The living purpose in you manifest
Of a more modest habit and a life
More nobly fashioned—if the slaughter done
On your dead husband seem of you abhorred
And those ill days misliked wherein your fame
Drank mortal poison from his murderer's hand—
If this be seen, and that your mind lives clear
From counsel of revenge upon those lords
Who sought your reformation, nor with hope
Nor dangerous forethought of device to be
Renews itself to do them some day wrong ;
Then may you now sit safe, and unreprieved
Expect an end of bondage ; for at large
You cannot think to live yet, who in time
May haply by repentance be restored
And for your prison somewhere here endured
Find yet your throne again, and sit renewed
More royal than men wist who saw the ship
Put in from France that bore you.

QUEEN

O my friend,
O brother, found now father to me too,

Who have raised and rebegotten me from death,
By how much less I thank you for my life
Think so much more for honour I give thanks
That you raise up the hope in me to have
Which was nigh dead for shame. O, let me hold

[Embracing him.]

My comfort in mine arms, and with dumb lips
Kiss you my thanks ; I looked for less than this,
But yet for comfort of you. One thing more,
Having so much, will I require, and cease—
Even for my son's sake and mine own to lay
The charge upon you of this regency
Which none might bear so noble, nor bring back
Her peace again to Scotland, as I know
Your hand shall bring ; and had I known betimes
I had not started from its curb aside
Nor set against its strength in no good hour
The feebleness of mine : but if your heart
Be large enough to let forgiveness in
Of my wrongs done and days of wanton will,
Take this charge too, to keep for me the forts
Of all that was my kingdom ; I would have
Nothing of mine lie now not in your hand ;
Keep too my jewels ; all I had of worth,
What help without you should I have of it,
What profit or what surety ? let your heart
Cast her not out who prays you of your grace
Take these in trust and me.

MURRAY

I may not these,
But you that put yourself into my trust
I will not fail.

QUEEN

Nay, you shall keep them too.

MURRAY

I would not put my hand forth uncompelled
To take for life and death the burden up
That burns as fire and bows the back that bears
As with an iron load ; and certainly
He that shall take this kingdom on his hand
I think shall live not long ; nor pride nor hope
But very love and strong necessity
Could only bow me down to obey their will
Who should enforce on mine the task to bear
This grievous office, that if Scotland bid
I for her sake must bear till I may die.
But if I be not bidden, for no love
Or fear or lust of kingdom will I seek
The labour and the grief of that great charge
That I may live and feel not.

QUEEN

By my lips,
That have no royal right to speak for her
Now, think that yet she bids you, seeing none else
To undo mine evil done on her, and heal
The wounds mine enemies and myself have made
In her sweet peace : she hath no stay but you ;
Whom other should she seek to ? and for me
Again I dare not urge you, but my heart
Is turned into a prayer that pleads with yours
To lend its weakness comfort of your strength
By taking off its fears ; these that break mine
Can bow not yours : O, take from me that weight

Which were to you but sport and ornament,
The natural honour of a hand so strong
And spirit elect of all men's souls alive
To do a work imperial.

MURRAY

 If not else,
But by me only may this land find peace,
By me then shall it ; for your private charge,
Impute not to me for default of love
That I beseech you lay no more on me
Than public need enforces ; in my trust
Your treasures were no safer than they stand
Now that I keep them not, and no man's tongue
Can tax me with them as detained from you
By fraud or usurpation ; which mine ear
Were loth to know was muttered.

QUEEN

 But you see
Nor they nor I have surety save in you ;
Let it be seen of them that else may doubt
How thankfully I trust you ; even for that
Do thus, to do me good in men's report
When they shall see us at one ; from mine own hand
Except you take them shall they not be rent
By craft or force of hidden or harrying hands
That could not wrest from yours what mine must yield
For fault of you to help me ?

MURRAY

 As you will.
I would not cross you where I might content,
Yet willingly I cannot take on me

More charge than needs of privy trusts to keep
That brings men's blame about them ; but in this
My will shall be your servant.

Re-enter LADY LOCHLEVEN *and* GEORGE DOUGLAS

For this time
I take farewell ; be patient, and seek peace
Whence God may send it.—To your gentler hand,
While yet the Lady Mary lives in ward,
Behoves not me commend her, being but bound
As reverently as may beseem your son
In the state's name to charge you that she find
At all men's hands that guard her now about
Good usage with safe keeping ; which to assure
Shall hardly need this young man's service here,
For whom the state has other use, and I
A worthier work than still to keep such watch
As porters use or pages.

LADY LOCHLEVEN

He and I
Stand at your bidding ; yet were nowise loth
The state that gave should take this charge away
It laid upon us.

QUEEN

Sir, the grace you brought
And comfort to me sorrowing and afraid
Go ever with you ; and farewell.

MURRAY

Farewell.

[*Exeunt* LADY LOCHLEVEN *and* MURRAY.]

QUEEN

Will you not go ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Whither you bid, and when,
I will go swiftly.

QUEEN

With your lord and mine,
I would have said ; yet irks it me to say
My lord, who had none under heaven, and was
Of these my lords once lady. Said I not
You should do well to cast off care of me
Whom you must leave indeed now at command
More powerful of more potent lips than mine ?
I would not have you set your younger will
Against his word imperial ; nor, I think,
Doth he fear that who bids us come and go
And whose great pleasure is that you part hence
And I sit here : be patient, and seek peace,
You heard him bid me ; patience we must have
If we would rest obedient ; and for peace,
So haply shall we find it, having learnt
What rest is in submission.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Bid me stay,
And that my will shall part not hence alive
What need I swear ?

QUEEN

Alas, your will may stay,
Your will may wait on me to do me good,
Your loves and wishes serve me when yourself

Shall live far off ; our lord forbids them not ;
It is the service of your present hand,
The comfort of your face, help of your heart,
That he forbids me.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

And though God forbade
Save by my death he should compel me not
To do this bidding ; only by your mouth
Of all that rule in heaven and earth will I
Be willingly commanded.

QUEEN

You must go.
Nay, I knew that ; how should one stay by me ?
There was not left me, by God's wrath or man's,
One friend when I came hither in the world ;
And from the waste and wilderness of grief
If one grain ripen—from the stone and sand
If one seed blossom—if my misery find
One spring on earth to assuage its fiery lip—
How should I hope that God or man will spare
To trample or to quench it ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

I am here
While you shall bid me live, and only hence
When you shall bid me but depart and die.

QUEEN

There was a time when I would dream that men
There were to do my bidding ; such as loved
And were beloved again, and knew not fear

Nor hope but of love's giving ; but meseemed
That in my dream all these were cast away,
And by God's judgment or through wrath of men
Or mine own fault or change and chance of time,
I lived too long to look for love in vain.
Many there are that hate me now of men ;
Doth one live yet that loves ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

If one there were

That for your love's sake should abhor his life,
Hating all hope save this, to die for you,
What should he do to die so?

QUEEN

If I bade
 That for my love's sake he should love his life
 And use its strength to cherish me, who knows
 If he would heed? or say I gave command
 To do some ill thing or of ill report—
 Were it to slay our brother now gone hence—
 Would one do that? I would not have it done,
 Though I should bid him. Do not answer me,
 As though I questioned with you seriously
 Or spake of things that might be thought upon,
 Who do but jest with grief as with my friend
 That plays again familiarly with me,
 And from the wanderings of a joyless wit
 Turn to clasp hands with sorrow. You must go.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Ay, when you bid ; but were my going from you
Part of your grief, which is more grief to me

Than my soul's going from forth my body were,
I would not set my face from hence alive.

QUEEN

I hold it not for no part of my grief
To bid you from me ; yet being here bound in
As I with walls and waters, we should find
Less help than yet I hope for of your hand
Being hence enlarged. We will take counsel, sir,
And choose, with no large choice to make of friends,
To whom we shall appoint you, by what mean
To deal for our deliverance : as with one
Once of my household and this lady's kin
Who here of all my Maries the last left
Partakes my bonds : the Laird of Ricarton,
My husband's kinsman ; and what readiest friends
Once more may be raised up, as when I fled
From shame and peril and a prison-house
As hateful as these bonds, to find on earth—
Ah, no such love and faith as yours in man.

SCENE V. *Holyrood*MURRAY *and* MORTON

MURRAY

I am vexed with divers counsels, and my will
Sees nor its way nor end. This act proclaimed
That seals the charge of murder on the queen
To justify our dealing had to it hands
That here first met ; Kirkaldy with Glencairn,

Balfour with Maitland, Huntley with Argyle,
True man with traitor, all were as one mind,
One tongue to tax her with complicity,
Found art and part with them that slew her lord ;
Men praised the council for this judgment given
As from a single and a resolute soul ;
Scarce one withstood save Herries, and his voice
Was as a wind that sings in travellers' ears
Unheeded ; then the doom that gives to death
All that in act maintain the former faith
And writes for Catholic traitor, should have purged
The state of treacherous or of dangerous friends
Such as made protest then against this law
And fled from our part to the Hamiltons,
Caithness and Athol, with the bishop called
Of Murray, whom the Assembly met to judge
By one same doom has with Argyle condemned
To stand in sackcloth for adulteries past
At Stirling through the time of service held
Within the chapel royal ; such men's stay
It irks not me to lose, who by their loss
Were fain to win their enemies for my friends
More fast and faithful : but men's sundering minds
Nor council nor assembly can reknit,
Though Knox there sit by Maitland, and Balfour
Touch sides with Craig ; and while the state as now
Lives many-minded and distraught of will,
How shall its hope be stable ?

MORTON

Some there are
Have all their will, or more than we that rule
By secular wit and might ; the preachers reign

With heavier hand than ours upon the state,
Who in this late assembly by their doom
Bade your fair sister of Argyle partake
The sackcloth penance of her slippery lord
For scandal to the Kirk done when last year
At the font's edge her arms sustained our prince
For baptism of such hands as served the mass ;
If it have leave long to sit lawgiver,
Their purity will pinch us.

MURRAY

Have no fear ;
It shall not Douglas : and we lack their help
Who sway the commons only with their breath,
Now most of all when our high counsels fail
And hopes are turned as 'twere to running streams
That flow from ours to feed our enemies' hands
With washings of our wreck, waifs of our strength,
That melts as water from us ; those chief twain
Whose league I sought by marriage, and had hope
To bind them to us as brethren, when Argyle
With me should knit himself anew, to wed
His brother to the sister of my wife
With happier hope than he espoused mine own,
While Huntley's son should lead my daughter home,
And with this fourfold knot our loves be tied
And fortunes with each other's growth ingrafted—
Both these look back now toward the Hamiltons
To mingle factions with them, being assured
Our hands now lack the secret sword we had
To draw at need against them, since their names
Set at Craigmillar to the bond of blood
Are with that bond consumed, and no tongue left

To wag in witness of their part of guilt
Now Bothwell's knaves are hanged that laid the
train

And Hay with them, and one most near his trust,
His kinsman Hepburn, from whose mouth con-
demned

And Ormiston's we have confession wrung
That marks with blood as parcel of their deed
More than Balfour that in the assembly sit
And must partake his surety ; this, my lord,
Craves of us care and counsel, that our names
Be writ not fool or coward, who took in hand
Such trust to work such treason.

MORTON

Nay, no Scot
Shall say we fell from faith or treacherously
Let men's hopes fade that trusted us, and sank
Through feebleness of ours ; yet have we strength
To lower the height of heart and confidence
That makes their faction swell, who were but late
Too faint of spirit, too fearful and unsure,
To be made firm with English subsidies ;
Three thousand marks that Scrope by secret hand
Sent from Carlisle to Herries could not serve
To give or shape or sinew to their plots
Who are now so great their house's heir must wed
No lowlier than a queen, and Bothwell's wife,
For this divorced or widowed.

MURRAY

Ay ; we know
The archbishop his good uncle with this youth

Hath in Dumbarton fortified himself,
And while they there sit strong and high in hope
Our prisoner and our penitent late, we hear,
Grows blithe of mood and wanton ; from her sight
Have I dismissed my mother's youngest born,
Lest in her flatteries his weak faith be snared
And strangled with a smile ; and for her hand
I have found a fitter suitor than Arbroath
When she shall wed again, within whose veins
Some drops of blood run royal as her own ;
Methuen, whose grandsire was the third that set
His ring on that Queen Margaret's wedded hand
From the seventh Henry sent ambassadress
To our fourth James, to bring for bridal gift
Her father's love and England's to her lord
And with the kiss of marriage on his lips
To seal that peace which with her husband's life
Found end at Flodden from her brother's hand
That split the heart of Scotland. So the queen,
If she wed Methuen, shall espouse a man
Whose father of the same queen's womb was born
That bore her father ; and whose blood as hers
Is lineal from the seed of English kings
Through one same mother's sons, queen once of
Scots

And daughter born and sister, though unqueened,
Of those twain Henries that made peace and war
With Scotland and her lord ; and by this match
The Hamiltons being frustrate of their hope
Could yet not tax us with a meaner choice
Than they would make for her, who while she lives
Must stand thenceforth far off from their designs
And disallied from all that in her name
Draw now to head against us ; and some help

We need the more to cross them now, that France,
To whom I thought to seek as to my friend
And thence find aid in this necessity
That else finds none, since England's jealous craft
Puts in our enemies' hands gold for a sword
More sharp than steel—France, that would send at
need

The choice of all her sons that hold our faith
To live and die beside us here in arms,
Grows chillier toward us than the changing wind
That brings back winter : for the brood of Guise,
Our prisoner's friends and kinsmen of Lorraine,
Prevail again on Catherine's adverse part,
Whose hate awhile gives way to them, and yields
Our cause into their hands that were more like
To help this daughter of their dangerous house
Take up the crown resigned and through their
strength

Renew this kingdom's ruin with her reign,
Than send us aid and arms to guard its peace
From inroad as from treason : which I doubt
We shall hear news of from my brother's tongue

Enter SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS

Who comes without a herald.

SIR W. DOUGLAS

Sir, the news
Is dashed with good and evil equally
That here I bring you ; for the treasons laid
Have missed their mark and left unwounded yet

My house's honour that retains in trust
So great a charge. You had word ere this of me
By what strange fortune was their plot made known
Who thought to fall upon us unaware
And find a ferry for some seventy swords
To cross the lake in mine own barge surprised
And smite those thirty guards that hold the walls
And make a murderous passage for the queen
To come forth free with feet that walked in blood ;
And how by one a Frenchman of her train
Who being not in their counsel heard some speech
Of such a preparation, and conceived
This was a plot to take her from your hand
Laid by the fiercer faction of the Kirk
That sought to snare and slay her in your despite,
To me was all discovered ; and betimes
I gave command no barge thenceforth should pass
Between the main shore and mine island walls,
But a skiff only that with single oars
Might be rowed over. Baffled thus, her friends
Were fain to buy the boatman's faith with gold,
Whom on suspicion I dismissed, but since
Finding less trust and service in the knave
That had his place, called back and bade take heed
Of these that would have won to their device
A foundling page within my castle bred
And called by mine own name ; who by this plot
Should have seduced for them my sentinels
And oped the gate by night ; but yet I find
For all toils set and gins to take their faith
In him and them no treason ; yet so near
Was treason to us, that not long since the queen
Had wellnigh slipped beyond our guard by day
In habit of a laundress that was hired

So to shift raiment with her ; but being forth
Betimes as was this woman's use to come
In the low light by dawn, at such an hour
As she was wont to sleep the morning out,
The fardel in her hand of clothes brought forth
And on her face the muffler, it befell
That as she sat before the rowers and saw
Some half her free brief way of water past,
By turn of head or lightning of her look
For mirth she could not hide and joyous heart,
Or but by some sweet note of majesty,
Some new bright bearing and imperious change
From her false likeness, so she drew their eyes
That one who rowed, saying merrily *Let us see*
What manner of dame is this, would fain pluck down
Her muffler, who to guard it suddenly
Put up her fair white hands, which seeing they knew
And marvelled at her purpose ; she thereat,
A little wroth but more in laughter, bared
Her head and bade stretch oars and take the land
On their lives' peril ; which regarding not,
They straight put back as men amazed, but swore
To keep fast locked from mine, of all men's eyes
The secret knowledge of this frustrate craft,
So set her down on the island side again
With muffled head and hidden hands, to wring
And weep apart for passion, where my watch
Looks now more strict upon her ; but I think,
For all her wrath and grief to be by chance
From her near hope cast down and height of mind
Wherein she went forth laughingly to find
What good might God bring of her perilous hour,
She hath lost not yet nor changed that heart nor hope,
But looks one day to mock us.

MURRAY

So I think ;

And in that fear would have you keep fast watch
By night and day till we take off the charge
Laid on your faith, and or enfranchise her
Or change her place of ward ; which, ere the spring
That holds in chase this winter's flying foot
Be turned to summer, haply shall be done.
What fashion holds our mother with the queen ?

SIR W. DOUGLAS

As she was ever tender of her state
And mild in her own office, so she keeps
Observance yet and reverence more than meet
Save toward a queen, toward this her guest enforced
Who smiles her back a prisoner's thanks, and sighs
That she should smile in prison ; but 'twixt whiles
Some change of mood will turn to scorn or spleen
Her practised patience, and some word take wing
Forth from her heart's root through her lips that hath
The gall of asps within it ; yet not this
Turns the heart hard or bitter that awaits
Her gentler change, pitying the wrong it bears
And her that wrongs it for the sorrow's sake
That chafes and rends her.

MURRAY

Pity may she give

And be praised for it ; but to entertain
Hope or desire that wars against her trust
Should turn that praise to poison. Have you seen
Since George went thence, or noted ere he went,

In her no token of a mingled mind
That sways 'twixt faith and such a faithless hope
As feeds a mother's love with deadly dreams
Of prophesying ambition? for in him
I spied the sickness of a tainted heart
And fever-fired from the most mortal eyes
That ever love drank death of.

SIR W. DOUGLAS

No, my lord.

MURRAY

I would fain trust her mind were whole in this
And her thoughts firm; yet would not trust too far,
Who know what force of fraud and fire of will
In that fierce heart and subtle, without fear,
That God hath given so sweet a hiding-place,
Make how much more the peril and the power
Of birth and kinglier beauty, that lay wait
For her son's sake to tempt her. We will hold
More speech of this; here shall you rest to-night.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI. *Lochleven Castle*

The QUEEN *and* MARY BEATON

QUEEN

Is it not sunset? what should ail the day
To hang so long in heaven? the world was blind
By this time yesternight. The lake gleams yet;

Will the sun never sink, for all the weight
That makes this hour so heavy ?

MARY BEATON

While you speak,
The outer gate that stands till nightfall wide
Shuts on the sundown ; and they bring the keys
That soon the page shall put into our hand
To let in freedom.

QUEEN

I could weep and laugh
For fear and hope and angry joy and doubt
That wring my heart. I am sick at once and well :
Shall I win past them in this handmaid's dress
If we be spied ? My hood is over broad ;
Help me to set it forward ; and your own
Sits loose ; but pluck it closer on your face
For cloak and cover from the keen moon's eye
That peers against us. Twice, thou knowest, yea
thrice,
God has betrayed me to mine enemies' hands
Even when my foot was forth ; if it slip now,
He loves nor kings that hold his office here
Nor his own servants, but those faithless mouths
That mock all sovereignties in earth or heaven.
If here he fail me and I fall again
To sit in bonds a year—by God's own truth,
I swear I will not keep this wall of flesh
To cage my spirit within these walls of stone,
But break this down to set that free from these,
That being delivered of men's wrongs and his
It may stand up, and gazing in his eyes
Accuse him of my traitors.

MARY BEATON

Keep good heart ;
Your hope before was feverish and too light,
And so it failed you : in this after plot
There is more form and likeness than in those
That left you weeping ; let not passion now
Foil your good fortune twice, or heat of mood
From keen occasion take the present edge
And blunt the point of fortune.

QUEEN

If I knew
This man were faithful—O, my heart that was
Is melted from me, and the heart I have
Is like wax melting. Were my feet once free,
It should be strong again ; here it sinks down
As a dead fire in ashes. Dare we think
I shall find faith in him, who have not found
In all the world ? no man of mine there is,
None of my land or blood, but hath betrayed,
Betrayed or left me.

MARY BEATON

Nay, too strange it were
That you should come to want men's faith, and look
For love of man in vain ; these were your jewels,
You cannot live to lack them ; nay, but less ;
Your common ornaments to wear and leave,
Your change of raiment to cast off, and bind
A fresher robe about you : while men live
And you live also, these must give you love,
And you must use it.

QUEEN

So one told me once—
That I must use and lose it. If my time
Be come to need man's love and find it not,
I have known death make a prophet of a man
That living could foretell but his own end,
Not save himself, being foolish ; and I too,
I am mad as he was, now to think on him
Or my dead follies. Were these walls away,
I should no more ; ay, when this strait is past,
I shall win back my wits and my blithe heart,
And make good cheer again.

Enter Page

PAGE

Here are the keys ;
I had wrought instead a ladder for our need
With two strong oars made fast across, for fear
I had failed at last from under my lord's eye
To sweep them off the board-head ; here they ring,
As joy-bells here to give your highness note
The skiff lies moored on the island's lee, and waits
But till the castle boats by secret hands
Be stripped of oars and rowlocks, and pursuit
Made helpless, maimed of all its means ; the crew
Is ready that shall lend us swifter wing
Than one man's strength to fly with ; and beyond
Your highness' friends upon the further bank
Wait with my master's horses ; never was
A fairer plot or likelier.

QUEEN

How thy face

Lightens ! Poor child, what knowest thou of the chance

That cast thee on my fortunes ? it may be
To death ere life break bud, and thy poor flower
The wind of my life's tempest shall cut off,
And blow thy green branch bare. Many there be
Have died, and many that now live shall die,
Ere my life end, for my life's sake ; and none
There is that knows, of all that love or hate,
What end shall come of this night's work, and what
Of all my life-days. I shall die in bonds
Perchance, a bitter death ; yet worse it were
To outlive dead years in prison, and to loathe
The life I could not lose. This will not be ;
No days and nights shall I see wax and wane,
Kindled and quenched in bondage, any more ;
For if to-night I stand not free on earth
As the sun stands in heaven, whose sovereign eye
Next day shall see me sovereign, I shall live
Not one day more of darkling life, as fire
Pent in a grate, bound in with blackening bars,
But like a star by God hurled forth of heaven
Fall, and men's eyes be darkened, and the world
Stand heart-struck, and the night and day be changed
That see me falling. If I win not forth,
But, flying, be taken of the hands that were
Before laid on me, they shall never think
To hold me more in fetters, but take heart
To do what earth saw never yet, and lay
By doom and sentence on their sovereign born
Death ; I shall find swift judgment, and short shrift

My justicers shall give me ; so at least
Shall I be quit of bondage. Come, my friends,
That must divide with me for death or life
This one night's issue : be it or worst or best,
Yet have ye no worse fortune than a queen,
Or she than ye no better. On this hour
Hang all those hours that yet we have to live :
Let us go forth to pluck the fruit of this
That leans now toward our hand. My heart is light ;
Be yours not heavier ; for your eyes and mine
Shall look upon these walls and waves no more.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII. *The Shore of Loch Leven*

GEORGE DOUGLAS, BEATON, RICARTON, *with*
Attendants

GEORGE DOUGLAS

I hear the beat of the oars : they make no haste :
How the stars thicken ! if a mist would take
The heaven but for an hour and hide them round——

RICARTON

How should they steer then straight ? we lacked but
light,
And these are happy stars that sign this hour
With earnest of good fortune ; and betimes
See by their favour where the prize we seek
Is come to port.

Enter the QUEEN, MARY BEATON, Page, and a Girl attending

QUEEN

Even such a night it was
I looked again for to deliver me,
Remembering such a night that broke my bonds
Two wild years past that brought me through to this;
The wind is loud beneath the mounting moon,
And the stars merry. Noble friends, to horse ;
When I shall feel my steed exult with me,
I will give thanks for each of your good deeds
To each man's several love. I know not yet
That I stand here enfranchised ; for pure joy
I have not laid it yet to heart ; methinks
This is a lightning in my dreams to-night
That strikes and is not, and my flattered eyes
Must wake with dawn in bonds. Douglas, I pray,
If it be not but as a flash in sleep
And no true light now breaking, tell me you,
That were my prison's friend ; I will believe
I am free as fire, free as the wind, the night,
All glad fleet things of the airier element
That take no hold on earth ; for even like these
Seems now the fire in me that was my heart
And is a song, a flame, a burning cloud
That moves before the sun at dawn, and fades
With fierce delight to drink his breath and die.
If ever hearts were stabbed with joy to death,
This that cleaves mine should do it, and one sharp
stroke
Pierce through the thrilled and trembling core like steel
And cut the roots of life. Nay, I am crazed,

To stand and babble like one mad with wine,
Stung to the heart and bitten to the brain
With this great drink of freedom ; O, such wine
As fills man full of heaven, and in his veins
Becomes the blood of gods. I would fain feel
That I were free a little, ere that sense
Be put to use ; those walls are fallen for me,
Those waters dry, those gaolers dead, and this
The first night of my second reign, that here
Begins its record. I will talk no more
Nor waste my heart in joyous words, nor laugh
To set my free face toward the large-eyed sky
Against the clear wind and the climbing moon,
And take into mine eyes and to my breast
The whole sweet night and all the stars of heaven,
But put to present work the heart and hand
That here rise up a queen's. Bring me to horse ;
We will take counsel first of speed, and then
Take time for counsel.

BEATON

Madam, here at hand
The horses wait : Lord Seyton rides with us
Hence to Queen's Ferry, where beyond the Forth
We reach Claude Hamilton, who with fresh steeds
Expects us ; to Long Niddry thence, and there
Draw rein among the Seytons, ere again
We make for Hamilton, whose walls should see
The sun and us together.

QUEEN

Well devised.
Where is the girl that fled with us, and gave

These garments for my surety? she shall have
Her part in my good hour, that in mine ill
Did me good service.

RICARTON

Madam, she must stay ;
We have not steeds enough, and those we have
May bear no load more than perforce they must,
Or we not hope to speed.

QUEEN

Nay, she shall go,
Not bide in peril of mine enemies here
While we fly scatheless hence.

GIRL

Most gracious queen,
Of me take no such care : I am well content
They should do with me all they would, and I
Live but so long to know my queen as safe
As I for her die gladly.

RICARTON

She says well ;
Get we to horse. I must ride south to rouse
My kinsfolk, and with all our Hepburn bands
Seize on Dunbar ; whence northward I may bear
Good tidings to your lord.

QUEEN

God make them good
That he shall hear of me, and from his mouth

Send me good words and comfort ! You shall ride
Straight from Lord Seyton's with my message borne
To all good soldiers of your clan and mine
And wake them for our common lord's dear love
To strike once more, or never while they live
Be called but slaves and kinless : then to him
For whom the bonds that I put off to-night
Were borne and broken. Douglas, of that name
Most tender and most true to her that was
Of women most unfriended, and of queens
Most abject and unlike to recompense,
Take in your hand the hand that it set free,
And lead me as you led me forth of bonds
To my more perfect freedom. Sirs, to horse. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII. *Hamilton Castle*

The QUEEN, ARGYLE, and HUNTLEY

QUEEN

I ever thought to find your faiths again
When time had set me free ; nor shall my love
To my good friends be more unprofitable
Than was my brother's, from whose promised hand
Both have withdrawn the alliance of your own
To plight once more with mine : your son, my lord,
And, noble sir, your brother, will not fail
Of worthier wedlock and of trustier ties
Than should have bound them to a traitor's blood,
His daughter, and the sister of his wife,
Whom he so thought to honour, and in them
Advance his counsels and confirm his cause

Through your great names allied, who now take
part

More worthily with one long overthrown
And late risen with many a true man's more
And royally girt round with many a friend's ;
Nor need we lay upon our kinsmen here
All our hope's burden, nor submit our hand
To marriage with our cousin's of Arbroath
For fault of other stay. For mine own mind,
I would stand rather on Dumbarton rock
Walled in with Fleming's spears, than here sit fast
With these six thousand ranged about the walls
That five days' suns have brought to strengthen me
Since I fled hither in these poor same weeds
That yet for need I wear. Now, by the joy
I had that night to feel my horse beneath
Bound like my heart that through those darkling
ways

Shot sunwards to the throne, I do not think
Thus to sit long at wait, who have the hands
Subscribed here of so many loyal lords
To take no thought but of their faith to me
Nor let dissension touch their hearts again
Till I sit crowned as arbitress of all
When the great cause is gained. Each bloodless day
Makes our foes greater ; from Dunbar Lord Hume,
Who thence with hand too swift cut off our friends,
Brings now six hundred to my brother's flag
Who hangs hard by us, and from Edinburgh
Grange leads his hundreds ; all the Glasgow folk,
For love of Lennox, with the Lothian carles,
Draw round their regent hither ; and God knows
These are no cowards nor men vile esteemed
That stand about him ; better is he served

Of them than we of Herries, whose false wit
Works with an open face and a close heart
For other ends than live upon his tongue
And fill with protestation those loud lips
That plead and swear on both sides ; he would stand
My counsellor, yet has not craft enough
To draw those enemies hence that watch us here
By tumult raised along the border side
For none to quell but Murray, who was bound
From Glasgow where he lies yet to Dumfries,
But halts to gather head and fall on us
When we set forth ; which by my private will
I would not yet, but that my kinsmen yearn
To bid him battle and with victory won
Seize to themselves the kingdom by my hand,
Which they should wield then at their will, and wed
To their next heir's ; so should ye have their seed
For kings of Scotland, who were leagued ere this
With our main foes, and to their hands but late
By composition and confederacy
Would have given up my life to buy their ends
Even with the blood whose kinship in their veins
They thought should make them royal.

ARGYLE

We must fear
These days that fleet and bring us no more strength
Bring to the regent comfort and good hope
From England of a quiet hand maintained
Upon the borders, and such present peace
As fights against us there upon his side
While he stands fast and gathers friends, who had
But common guard about him when your grace
Fled hither first, yet would not at the news

For dread of our near neighbourhood turn back
With that thin guard to Stirling ; and by this
The chiefs of all his part are drawn to him,
Morton and Mar, Semple and Ochiltree,
And they that wrung forth of your royal hand
The writing that subscribed it kingdomless :
All these are armed beneath him.

QUEEN

These are strong,
Yet are our friends not weaker ; twain alone,
You twain with whom I speak, being on my side,
I would not fear to bide the feud of these ;
And here are Cassilis, Eglinton, Montrose,
Ross, Crawford, Errol, Fleming, Sutherland,
Herries with Maxwell, Boyd and Oliphant,
And Livingstone, and Beaumont that was sent
To speak for France as with mine uncle's tongue
Pleading with those my traitors for that life
Which here he finds enfranchised ; and all these
As one true heart to me and faithful hand,
In God's name and their honour's leagued as friends
Who till mine enemies be cast down will know
Nought save their duty to me, that no strife
Shall rend in sunder, and no privy jar
Rive one from other that stands fast by me.
This have they sworn ; and by my trust in them,
I will not doubt with favour or with force
To quell the hardiest heart set opposite.
Have I not sent forth word of amnesty
To every soul in Scotland free save these,
The top and crown of traitors, Morton first,
And Lindsay, from whose hand I took a pledge
To be redeemed with forfeit of his head ;

Semple, that writ lewd ballads of my love,
And that good provost whom I swore to give
For one night's prison given me in his house
A surer gaol for narrower resting-place
Than that wherein I rested not ; and last
Balfour, that gave my lord's trust up and mine ?
Upon these five heads fallen will I set foot
When I tread back the stair that mounts my throne ;
All others shall find grace ; yea, though their hearts
Were set more stark against me and their hands
More dangerous aimed than these ; for this God
knows,

My heart more honours and shall ever love
A hardy foe more than a coward friend ;
And Hume and Grange, mine enemies well approved,
Could love or recompense reknit their faiths
To my forsworn allegiance, in mine eyes
Should stand more clear than unrevolted men
Whose trustless faith is further from my trust
Than from my veins the nearness of their blood.
I am not bitter-hearted, nor take pride
To keep the record of wrongs done to me
For privy hate to gnaw upon, and fret
Till all its wrath be wroken ; I desire
Not blood so much of them that seek mine own
As victory on them, who being but subdued
For me may live or die my subjects : this
I care not if I win with liberal words
Or weapons of my friends, for love or fear,
Or by their own dissensions that may spring
And blossom to my profit ; and I hold
Nor fear nor grief grievous nor terrible
That might buy victory to me, for whose sake
Peril and pain seem pleasant, and all else

That men thirst after as I thirst for this,
Wealth, honour, pleasure, all things weighed there-
with

Seem to my soul contemptible and vile.
Nor would I reign that I might take revenge,
But rather be revenged that I might reign.
For to live conquered and put on defeat,
To sit with humbled head and bear base life,
Endure the hours to mock me, and the days
To take and give me as a bonds slave up
For night by night to tread on—while death lives
And may be found or man lay hold on him,
I will not have this to my life, but die.
I know not what is life that outlives hope,
But I will never ; when my power were past,
My kingdom gone, my trust brought down, my will
Frustrate, I would not live one heartless hour
To think what death were gentlest ; none so sharp
But should be softer to my bosom found
Than that which felt it strike.

HUNTLEY

You speak as ever
Your own high soul and speech ; no spirit on earth
Was ever seen more kinglike than lifts up
With yours our hearts to serve you for its sake
As these have served that here would speak with
you,

Enter BEATON *and* MARY BEATON

To whom our loves yield place.

[Exeunt ARGYLE *and* HUNTLEY.

QUEEN

My chance were ill
If to no better love your loves gave way
Than that which makes us friends.—You are come
betimes,
If you come ready now to ride ; here lie
The letters you must bear : the cardinal's this,
Mine uncle's of Lorraine, to whose kind hand
Did I commend the first news of my flight
Sent from Lord Seyton's while our horses breathed ;
By this shall he receive my mind writ large
And turn his own to help me. Look you say
Even as I write, you left me in such mind
As he would know me, for all past faults done
Bent but to seek of God and of the world
Pardon ; as knowing that none but only God
Has brought me out of bonds, and inly fixed
In perfect purpose for his mercy shown
To show a thankful and a constant heart,
As simple woman or as queen of Scots,
In life and death fast cleaving to his Church,
As I would have him that shall read believe
My life to come shall only from his lips
Take shape and likeness, by their breath alone
Still swayed and steered ; to whom you know I look
For reconciling words that may subdue
To natural pity of my labouring cause
The queen that was my mother and her son
My brother king that in my husband's seat
Sits lineal in succession. Say too this,
That without help I may not hold mine own,
And therefore shall he stand the more my friend
And do the kindlier the more haste he makes

With all good speed to raise and to despatch
A levy of a thousand harquebusmen
To fill the want up of my ranks, that yet
Look leaner than mine enemies'. This for France ;
And this to the English queen delivering say,
I look being free now for that help of hers
That in my last year's bonds not once or twice
I had by word of promise, and not doubt
This year to have indeed : which if I may,
When from her hand I take my crown again,
I shall thenceforth look for no other friend
And try no further faith. This private word
In London to the ambassador of Spain
Fail not to bear, that being set round with spies
I may not write ; but he shall tell his king
The charges that men cast on me are false,
And theirs the guilt that held me in their bonds
Who stand in spirit firm to one faith with him
From whom I look for counsel. I well think
My sister's love shall but desire to hold
A mean betwixt our parties, and pronounce
On each side judgment, as by right and might
'Twixt mine and me the imperial mediatress,
Commanding peace, controlling war, that must
Determine this dark time and make alone
An end of doubt and danger ; which perchance
May come before her answer. Haste, and thrive.

[*Exit* BEATON.

Now, what say you? shall fortune stand our friend
But long enough to seem worth hope or fear,
Or fall too soon from us for hope to help
Or fear to hurt more than an hour of chance
Might make and unmake? This were now my day
To try the soothsaying of men's second sight

Who read beyond the writing of the hour
And utter things unborn ; now would I know,
And yet I would not, how my life shall move
And toward what end for ever ; which to know
Should help me not to suffer, nor undo
One jot that must be done or borne of me,
Nor take one grain away. I would not know it ;
For one thing haply might that knowledge do,
Or one thing undo—to bring down the heart
Wherewith I now expect it. We shall know,
When we shall suffer, what God's hour will bring ;
If filled with wrath full from his heavy hand,
Or gently laid upon us. I do think,
If he were wroth with aught once done of me,
That anger should be now fulfilled, and this
His hour of comfort ; for he should not stand,
For his wrath's sake with me, mine enemies' friend,
Who are more than mine his enemies. Never yet
Did I desire to know of God or man
What was designed me of them ; nor will now
For fear desire the knowledge. What I may,
That will I foil of all men's enmities,
And what I may of hope and good success
Take, and praise God. Yet thus much would I
know,
If in your sight, who have seen my whole life run
One stream with yours since either had its spring,
My chance to come look foul or fair again
By this day's light and likelihood.

MARY BEATON

In sooth,
No soothsayer am I, yet so far a seer,

That I can see but this of you and me,
We shall not part alive.

QUEEN

Dost thou mean well ?

Thou hast been constant ever at my hand
And closest when the worst part of my fate
Came closest to me ; firm as faith or love
Hast thou stood by my peril and my pain,
And still where I found these there found I thee,
And where I found thee these were not far off.
When I was proud and blithe (men said) of heart,
And life looked smooth and loving in mine eyes,
Thou wouldst be sad and cold as autumn winds,
Thy face discomfutable, and strange thy speech,
Thy service joyless ; but when times grew hard,
And there was wind and fire in the clear heaven,
Then wast thou near ; thy service and thy speech
Were glad and ready ; in thine eyes thy soul
Seemed to sit fixed at watch as one that waits
And knows and is content with what shall be.
Nor can I tell now if thy sight should put
More faith in me or fear, to trust or doubt
The chance forefigured in thee ; for thou art
As 'twere my fortune, faithful as man's fate,
Inevitable ; I cannot read the roll
That I might deem were hidden in thy hand
Writ with my days to be, nor from thine eyes
Take light to know ; for fortune too is blind
As man that knows not of her, and thyself,
That art as 'twere a type to me and sign
Incognizable, art no more wise than I
To say what I should hope or fear to learn,
Or why from thee.

MARY BEATON

 This one thing I know well
That hope nor fear need think to feed upon,
That I should part from you alive, or you
Take from me living mine assurance yet
To look upon you while you live, and trace
To the grave's edge your printed feet with mine.

QUEEN

Wilt thou die too ?

MARY BEATON

 Should I so far so long
Follow my queen's face to forsake at last
And lose my name for constancy ? or you
Whose eyes alive have slain so many men
Want when death shuts them one to die of you
Dying, who had so many loving lives
To go before you living ?

QUEEN

 Thou dost laugh
Always, to speak of death ; and at this time
God wot it should beseem us best to smile
If we must think upon him. I and thou
Have so much in us of a single heart
That we can smile to hear of that or see
Which sickens and makes bleed faint hearts for fear ;
And well now shall it stand us both in stead
To make ours hard against all chance, and walk
Between our friends and foes indifferently
As who may think to see them one day shift

From hate to love and love again to hate
As time with peaceable or warlike hand
Shall carve and shape them ; and to go thus forth
And make an end shall neither at my need
Deject me nor uplift in spirit, who pass
Not gladly nor yet lothly to the field
That these my present friends have in my name
Set for the trial of my death or life.
Thou knowest long since God gave me cause to say
I saw the world was not that joyous thing
Which men would make it, nor the happiest they
That lived the longest in it ; so I thought
That year the mightiest of my kinsmen fell
Slain by strong treason ; and these five years gone
Have lightened not so much my life to me
That I should love it more or more should loathe
That end which love or loathing, faith or fear,
Can put not back nor forward by a day. [Exeunt.

SCENE IX. *Langside*

MURRAY, MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, OCHILTREE, SIR
WILLIAM DOUGLAS, KIRKALDY, *and their Forces*

MURRAY

They cannot pass our place of vantage here
To choose them out a likelier. Let our lines
Lie close on either side the hollow strait
Flanked as the hill slopes by those cottage walls,
While here the head of our main force stands fast

With wings flung each way forth : that narrow
street
Shall take them snared and naked.

SIR W. DOUGLAS

I beseech you,
If you suspect no taint or part in me
Of treason in our kin, that I may have
The first of this day's danger.

MURRAY

No man here
Of all whose hearts are armed for Scotland hath
First place in this day's peril, no man last,
But all one part of peril and one place
To stand and strike, if God be good to us,
In the last field that shall be fought for her
Upon this quarrel. Who are they that lead
The main of the queen's battle ?

KIRKALDY

On their left
Lord Herries, and Argyle in front ; with him
Claude Hamilton and James of Evandale
Bring up their turbulent ranks.

LINDSAY

Why, these keep none
That crowd against us ; horse and mingled foot
Confound each other hurtling as they come
Sheer up between the houses.

MURRAY

Some default
That maims the general strength has in their need
Held them an hour delaying : our harquebusmen,
Two thousand tried, the best half of our foot,
Keep the way fast each side even to this height
Where stands our strength in the open. We shall
have,

If aught win through of all their chivalry,
Some sharp half-hour of hand to hand at last
Ere one thrust other from this brow. Lord Hume,
Keep you the rear of our right wing that looks
Toward Herries and his horsemen ; Ochiltree,
Stand you beside him ; Grange and Lindsay here
Shall bide with me the main front of their fight
When these break through our guard. Let word be
given

That no man when the day is won shall dare
Upon our side to spill one drop of blood
That may be spared of them that yield or fly. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X. *Another part of the Field*

Enter HERRIES and SEYTON, with their Soldiers

HERRIES

If they of our part hold the hill-top yet,
For all our leader's loss we have the day.

SEYTON

They stand this half-hour locked on both sides fast
And grappling to the teeth. I would to God

When for faint heart and very fear Argyle
Fell from his horse before the battle met
The devil had writhed his neck round, whose delay
At point to charge first maimed us ; else by this
We had scattered them as crows. Make up again
And drive their broken lines in on the rear
While those in front stand doubtful. Charge once
more,

Enter OCHILTREE and HUME, with Soldiers

And all this side is ours.—Lord Ochiltree,
Yield, in the queen's name.

OCHILTREE

In the king's I stand
To bid his traitors battle.

[They fight ; OCHILTREE falls.]

HERRIES

Stand thou too,
Or give us place ; I had rather have to-day
At my sword's end thee than a meaner man
To try this cause.

HUME

This edge of mine shall try
Which side and steel be truer.
[They fight ; HUME is wounded.]

SEYTON

God and the queen !
Set on ; this height once ours, this day is too,
And all days after.

HERRIES

Halt not yet, good friends,
Till with our bright swords we have crowned the hill
Whereon they stand at grapple. Close again,
And we ride lords at large of the free field
Whence these fall hurled in sunder.

SEYTON

To the height !
Our fellows are fast locked yet with our foes ;
Make up there to their comfort.

*Enter LINDSAY, KIRKALDY, SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS,
young OCHILTREE, with Soldiers*

LINDSAY

Sirs, not yet ;
Ere ye win through there be more spears to break
Than there in fight are fastened. Stand, or yield.

HERRIES

The Highland folk that doubtfully held off
Are fallen upon our flank ; hear you the noise ?
Back, sirs, bear back : we are sped.

[Exit with his followers.]

SEYTON

The day is gone ;
Let life go after ; for I will not fly
To meet my queen's face as a beaten man.

Enter MURRAY, MORTON, &c., with Soldiers

MURRAY

Charge once, and then sheathe swords ; the field is
ours :
They fly now both ways broken. Some one spur
To bid those knaves that howl upon the rear
Cut short their quest of blood ; they were too slack
Who are now so hot, when first the hunt was up ;
They shall not flesh those fangs on flying men
That in the fight were bloodless.

SEYTON

Men, stand fast ;
Let not the currish cry of Highland hounds
Bark on your fugitive quarry : here a man
May fall not like a stag or harried hare,
But die more soldierlike than in the toils
With their loud pack upon him.

YOUNG OCHILTREE

Die then here
And pay me for my father, if God please
My life with his shall lie not on thy hand,
But thine on mine as forfeit. [*They fight ; SEYTON falls.*]

MURRAY

Slay him not ;

I say, put up your sword.

YOUNG OCHILTREE

Sir, pardon me ;

There bleeds my father yet : he too shall die.

MURRAY

Young man, nor he nor any of his part
When I say, Live. Take up your sword again ;
And by this hand that struck it from your own
Be ruled and learn what loyal use it hath,
Which is not on its prisoner. Send forth word
That none take life of any man that yields ;
Pursue, but slay not ; for the day is won,
And this last battle ended that shall see
By Scottish hands the reek of Scotsmen slain
Defame the face of Scotland. While I live,
If God as on this day be good to her,
Her eyes shall look on her own blood no more.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE XI. *The Heights near Langside*

The QUEEN, MARY BEATON, FLEMING, BOYD, *and*
young MAXWELL

QUEEN

This is the last time I shall look on war :
Upon this day I know my fate is set

As on a sword's point. Does the fight stand still,
That we see nothing on that hill's brow stir
Where both sides lashed together ?

FLEMING

If the light

Tell mine eyes truth that reel with watching, both
Stand with spears crossed and locked so hard, and
points
So fast inwound with such inveteracy,
That steel can thrust not steel an inch away
Nor foot push foot a hair's breadth back that hangs
On the hill's edge and yields not. Hark ! the noise
Grows sharper and more various in its cry
Than first it was ; there comes upon the day
Some change for good or ill ; but for my charge,
I would not say *Would God my hand were there*,
But take its chance upon it.

QUEEN

Be content

To stand this day our soldier at her side
Who will not live to lay such charge again
On them that love her. Lo there, on the left
They charge again from our part.

MAXWELL

There it is

My father fights ; his horse are they that make
The hill's length rock and lighten as a sea ;
Look where the waves meet as that wind of steeds
Sweeps them together ; how they reel and fall

MARY BEATON

Here comes one
Hot-spurred with haste and pale with this hour's
news :
Now shall we know what work it had to do
And what the next hour may.

Enter GEORGE DOUGLAS

GEORGE DOUGLAS

The day is lost.
There is but one way with us ; here we stand
As in death's hand already. You must fly,
Madam, while time be left or room for flight,
As if there be I know not.

FLEMING

Is the van
Broken ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Look up where late it stood so fast
That wellnigh for an hour the grappling ranks
Were so enlinked in front, the men behind
That fired across the rank of them before
And hurled their pistols in their enemies' face
Above their comrades' heads that held the van
Saw them yet reeking on the spear-shafts lodged
That caught them flatlong fallen athwart the staves
Fixed opposite and level, till a shot
Slew him that led behind the artillery up

As the first round was ended on our part,
And straight a gunner's linstock dropped, and gave
Fire to the powder-waggon.

MAXWELL

But the horse—
We saw my father's with Lord Seyton's horse
Hurl up against the left side round the hill
And break their right wing in the rear.

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Ye saw?
But not who brought them rescue, and bore back
Your father's force with might and ruin; Grange
And Lindsay, with my brother third, who fights
With the more bitter heart and hate to-day
For our name's sake to purge him of my deed
And wreak him on my friends; and would to God,
But for the service' sake I had to do,
He had met me whom perchance he sought, and slain,
Ere I had borne this news out of the fight
To bid you fly.

QUEEN

Where will God set mine end?
I am wearied of this flying from death to death
That is my life, and man's: where'er I go,
From God and death I fly not: and even here
It may be they must find me.

MARY BEATON

Nay, not yet;
Take heart again, and fly.

QUEEN

O, this I knew,
Even by thine eyes I knew it a great while since
As now by mine. Our end of fear is come,
That casts out hope as well. Let us make hence.
Perchance our help is in Dumbarton yet
Upon the rock where I would fain at first
Have set my feet ; how say you, Fleming, now ?
May we there make us fast ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

The ways are thronged
With arms and noise of enemies ; everywhere
The land is full of death and deadly cries
From throats that gape for blood ; the regent's horse
Hold all the highway ; and the straiter lanes
Stand thick with peasant folk whose hands are armed
With staves and sickles in their rage caught up
To strike at you for fault of sword or pike
Wherewith to charge us flying : no way is left
But south to Galloway and Lord Herries' land,
Where you may breathe but for a doubtful day
In the sea's sight of refuge.

MAXWELL

In God's name
Take his good counsel, madam ; as you know
The noble Douglas wise and true, believe
So shall you find my father's men and mine
In this great need.

QUEEN

Come, help me then to horse ;
If I must ride some hundred miles to breathe,
As we must fly no less, I think, or fall
Among our foes that follow, in my mind
The worst it were not nor the unkindest death
To die in saddle. I will not give again,
So please it God, into mine enemies' hands
My body up for bondage ; twice or thrice
I have ridden hard by stars of March or May
With false or true men to my left and right
The wild night through for death or kingly life,
And if I ride now with few friends at hand
I have none false of them ; or if as once
One ride with me that had my hate alive
Who rode with me to his own grave, and now
Holds me in chase toward mine—O, thou that wast
My hate and husband, whom these men to-day
Take on them to revenge, and in thy name
Turn all men's hearts against me that were born
Mine and all swords that served me, if thou be
A shadow at hand, a ghost unreconciled,
That waits to take his triumph, hear and see
If in this hour that smites me, which is thine,
Thou find one thought in me that bows my heart,
One pang that turns it from the thing it was,
One pulse that moves me to repent or fear
For what was done or shall be ; if thou have
But so much power upon me to be called
Less hateful or more fearful, and thy death
With aught of dread have clothed the thought of thee
That thy life had not ; if thou seest me fly,
Then must thou see too that thou shalt not see

In death or life one part of spirit or sense
In me that calls thee master. To God's hand
I give the rest ; but in mine own I hold
The perfect power for good or evil days
To keep the heart I had, and on myself
Lose not one jot of lordship ; so may God
Love me no less and be no slower, I think,
To help my soul than theirs more vile than mine
And made for chance to mar, whercon their fate
Has power as on their bodies. If he will,
Now should he help, or never ; for we leave
A field more fatal to us and day more foul
Than ever cast out hope. I am loth to go
More than to die ; yet come what will soe'er,
I shall no more. Thou told'st me not of this,

[To MARY BEATON.

But yet I learnt it of thee. Come ; we have
One dark day less of doom to see and live
Who have seen this and die not. Stay by me ;
I know thou wilt ; if I should bid thee go,
It were but even as if I bade thee stay
Who hast as far to flee from death as I. [Exeunt.

SCENE XII. *Dundrennan Abbey*

The QUEEN and HERRIES

QUEEN

Talk not to me of France ; this man it was
That gave his tongue to serve my kinsmen's plea
Who fain had seen me plight at Hamilton
To their Arbroath my hand and kingdom ; nay,

I will not seek my fate at Catherine's hand,
Nor on those lips that were my mother's watch
My life hang weighed between a word and smile,
Nor on that sleek face of the Florentine
Read my doom writ, nor in her smooth swart cheek
See the blood brighten with desire of mine.
I will not live or die upon her tongue
Whose hate were glad to give me death or life
More hateful from her giving ; and I know
How she made proffer to my last year's lords
To take me from their bondage to her own
And shut my days up cloistered ; even such love
Should France afford me now that in men's sight
I stand yet lower, as fallen from this year's hope
To live discrowned for ever. Tell him this
Who rode with you behind me from the field,
And bid him bear his mistress word of me
As one that thinks not to be made the mean
For them to weave alliance with my foes,
And with the purchase of my bartered blood
Buy back their power in Scotland.

HERRIES

I shall say it ;
Yet this man's friendship, madam, might find faith
Who by so wild a way has followed you
To this third day that sees your flight at end,
Where you may sit some forty days secure
In trust and guard of mine.

QUEEN

Ay, here I might,
Were I well weary with my two nights' sleep

On this hard earth that was my naked bed
Whom it casts out of kingdom ; but, my lord,
For thirty leagues and more of ridden ground
And two days' fare of peasants' meal and milk
I am not yet nigher but by two days to death,
Nor spent in spirit for weariness or fear
Nor in my body broken, that my need
Should hold me here in bonds, or on your faith
Lay a new charge of danger. Here, you say,
And Beaumont with you, I may bide awhile
The levy of my friends whose rallying force
May gather to me, or in their default
Hence to Dumbarton may I pass by sea
Or forth to France with safer sails, and prove
What faith is there in friendship. Now my mind
Is nowise here to tarry ; your true love
Shall not for guerdon of its trust and care
Be tried again with peril, that as well
May be put by for your faith's sake and mine
So mutually made much of ; nor shall they,
Whose wounds run red yet from their regent's hand
That on this border laid so sore a scourge
As late their blood bore witness, for my sake
Or give their blood again or lose their faith
That should for me be proven, and being found true
Bring them to death should we twice fail, or false
Turn their safe life to shame. This shall not be ;
But I, content to make no trial of these,
Will hold them true and leave them unessayed
To live in honour. Friends I yet should have
Whose peace and life lie not in those men's hands
That would make prey of mine ; their faith is firm
And their hearts great as mine own hope in them
Who look toward me from England ; all the north

No less desires me than I need their love,
To lift our creed and cause up that lies low,
But wounded not to death. I have their names
Who first I think will meet me face to face
And lay their loyal hands in mine and pledge
Their noble heads for surety ; lord and knight
Whose fathers yielded up their lives for faith
Shall fail not now to seek me cast out hence
And gird me fast with all their following round
And stalwart musters of their spearmen raised
To do me service of stout heart and steel
For these lords' sake that call me lady ; names
That bear the whole might of this northern land
Upon their blazon, and the grace and strength
Of their old honour with them to that side
That they shall serve on ; first the two great earls,
Then Dacre, Norton, Swinburne, Markinfield,
With all their houses, all the border's flower
Of ancient faith and fame ; had I but these
To rise up when I call and do me right
I were not poorly friended, with no more
Than this for trust to lean on ; but I think
To find not such friends only as their name
And cause should make in danger fast to mine,
To link our names in all men's eyes that read
Of faith in man for ever ; even the queen
My sister's self shall fight upon my side,
Being either found my friend for whom she swore
If I were slain to fill this land with fires,
Or casting off my cause and me stand up
As much their enemy that partake my faith
As mine who lack not friends in all her land
That in this cause cast off will strike at her
For God's sake on my party. But indeed

I look to find not such a foe of her
As should have heart or wit to fight with me
Though she had will who has not ; for her mind
Still moving like a blown and barren sea
Has yet not ever set so far toward storm
Or so much shifted from its natural tide
As to seem safe or prosperous for their sails
Who traffic for my ruin ; and I fear
No wind of change that may breathe sharp on me
When once I stand in mine own name to speak
Before her face and England's. If she will,
By her shall I come back to reign her friend ;
If not by her, then by their loves and hands
Who shall put off her sovereignty for mine.
There is not and there needs no better way
Than here lies fair before my feet, which yet
Are not so tired but they may tread it through
To the good end. My heart is higher again
Than ere that field it was, I know not why,
Which sent me hither. You shall write for me
Word to the warden of Carlisle, and say
Your queen seeks covert for her crownless head
With him the first in England ; and thereon
Ere he send answer or to-morrow set
Will I pass over.

HERRIES

I would fain believe
His queen were true of heart, and all your friends
As strong to serve as faithful ; yet may she
Have better will than she has power to make,
As it would be, your servant ; and the land
Is many-minded, rent with doubt in twain,

And full of fears and factions ; you may pass
Even in this hope that now builds up your heart
To find less help at no less need than here
On darker ways and deadlier : yet your will
Shall if it hold be done.

QUEEN

Despatch, and write ;
To stand before the gate of days to be
And beat their doors for entrance is more pain
Than to pass in and look on life or death.
Here will I sleep within your ward to-night,
And then no more in Scotland. Nay, make haste ;
I would those hours were past that hold me here.

SCENE XIII. *The Shore of Solway Firth*

The QUEEN, MARY BEATON, HERRIES, GEORGE
DOUGLAS, *Page and Attendants* ' .

QUEEN

Is not the tide yet full ?

HERRIES

Come half an hour,
And it will turn ; but ere that ebb begin,
Let me once more desire your pardon, though
I plead against your pleasure. Here you stand
Not yet dethroned from royal hope, not yet
Discrowned of your great name, whose natural power

Faith here forgets not, nor man's loyal love
Leaves off to honour ; but gone hence, your name
Is but a stranger's, subject to men's laws,
Alien and liable to control and chance
That are the lords of exile, and command
The days and nights of fugitives ; your hope
Dies of strange breath or lives between strange lips,
And nor your will nor only God's beside
Is master of your peace of life, but theirs
Who being the lords of land that harbours you
Give your life leave to endure their empire : what
Can man do to you that a rebel may,
Which fear might deem as bad as banishment ?
Not death, not bonds are bitterer than his day
On whom the sun looks forth of a strange sky,
Whose thirst drinks water from strange hands, whose
lips

Eat stranger's bread for hunger ; who lies down
In a strange dark and sleeps not, and the light
Makes his eyes weep for their own morning, seen
On hills that helped to make him man, and fields
Whose flowers grew round his heart's root ; day like
night

Denies him, and the stars and airs of heaven
Are as their eyes and tongues who know him not.
Go not to banishment ; the world is great,
But each has but his own land in the world.
There is one bosom that gives each man milk,
One country like one mother : none sleeps well
Who lies between strange breasts ; no lips drink
life

That seek it from strange fosters. Go not hence ;
You shall find no man's faith or love on earth
Like theirs that here cleave to you.

QUEEN

I have found

And think to find no hate of men on earth
Like theirs that here beats on me. Hath this earth
Which sent me forth a five-years' child, and queen
Not even of mine own sorrows, to come back
A widowed girl out of the fair warm sun
Into the grave's mouth of a dolorous land
And life like death's own shadow, that began
With three days' darkness—hath this earth of yours
That made mine enemies, at whose iron breast
They drank the milk of treason—this hard nurse,
Whose rocks and storms have reared no violent
thing

So monstrous as men's angers, whose wild minds
Were fed from hers and fashioned—this that bears
None but such sons as being my friends are weak,
And strong, being most my foes—hath it such grace
As I should cling to, or such virtue found
In some part of its evil as my heart
Should fear, being free, to part from? Have I lived,
Since I came here in shadow and storm, three days
Out of the storm and shadow? Have I seen
Such rest, such hope, such respite from despair,
As thralls and prisoners in strong darkness may
Before the light look on them? Hath there come
One chance on me of comfort, one poor change,
One possible content that was not born
Of hope to break forth of these bonds, or made
Of trust in foreign fortune? Here, I knew,
Could never faith nor love nor comfort breed
While I sat fast in prison; ye, my friends,
The few men and the true men that were mine,

What were ye but what I was, and what help
Hath each love had of other, yours of mine,
Mine of your faith, but change of fight and flight,
Fear and vain hope and ruin? Let me go,
Who have been but grief and danger to my friends;
It may be I shall come with power again
To give back all their losses, and build up
What for my sake was broken.

HERRIES

Did I know it,
Yet were I loth to bid you part, and find
What there you go to seek; but knowing it not,
My heart sinks in me and my spirit is sick
To think how this fair foot once parted hence
May rest thus light on Scottish ground no more.

QUEEN

It shall tread heavier when it steps again
On earth which now rejects it; I shall live
To bruise their heads who wounded me at heel,
When I shall set it on their necks. Come, friends,
I think the fisher's boat hath hoised up sail
That is to bear none but one friend and me:
Here must my true men and their queen take leave,
And each keep thought of other. My fair page,
Before the man's change darken on your chin
I may come back to ride with you at rein
To a more fortunate field: howe'er that be,
Ride you right on with better hap, and live
As true to one of merrier days than mine
As on that night to Mary once your queen.

Douglas, I have not won a word of you ;
What would you do to have me tarry ?

GEORGE DOUGLAS

Die.

QUEEN

I lack not love it seems then at my last.
That word was bitter ; yet I blame it not,
Who would not have sweet words upon my lips
Nor in mine ears at parting. I should go
And stand not here as on a stage to play
My last part out in Scotland ; I have been
Too long a queen too little. By my life,
I know not what should hold me here or turn
My foot back from the boat-side, save the thought
How at Lochleven I last set foot aboard,
And with what hope, and to what end ; and now
I pass not out of prison to my friends,
But out of all friends' help to banishment.
Farewell, Lord Herries.

HERRIES

God go with my queen,
And bring her back with better friends than I.

QUEEN

Methinks the sand yet cleaving to my foot
Should not with no more words be shaken off,
Nor this my country from my parting eyes
Pass unsaluted ; for who knows what year
May see us greet hereafter ? Yet take heed,

Ye that have ears, and hear me ; and take note,
Ye that have eyes, and see with what last looks
Mine own take leave of Scotland ; seven years since
Did I take leave of my fair land of France,
My joyous mother, mother of my joy,
Weeping ; and now with many a woe between
And space of seven years' darkness, I depart
From this distempered and unnatural earth
That casts me out unmothered, and go forth
On this grey sterile bitter gleaming sea
With neither tears nor laughter, but a heart
That from the softest temper of its blood
Is turned to fire and iron. If I live,
If God pluck not all hope out of my hand,
If aught of all mine prosper, I that go
Shall come back to men's ruin, as a flame
The wind bears down, that grows against the wind,
And grasps it with great hands, and wins its way,
And wins its will, and triumphs ; so shall I
Let loose the fire of all my heart to feed
On these that would have quenched it. I will make
From sea to sea one furnace of the land
Whereon the wind of war shall beat its wings
Till they wax faint with hopeless hope of rest,
And with one rain of men's rebellious blood
Extinguish the red embers. I will leave
No living soul of their blaspheming faith
Who war with monarchs ; God shall see me reign
As he shall reign beside me, and his foes
Lie at my foot with mine ; kingdoms and kings
Shall from my heart take spirit, and at my soul
Their souls be kindled to devour for prey
The people that would make its prey of them
And leave God's altar stripped of sacrament

As all kings' heads of sovereignty, and make
Bare as their thrones his temples ; I will set
Those old things of his holiness on high
That are brought low, and break beneath my feet
These new things of men's fashion ; I will sit
And see tears flow from eyes that saw me weep
And dust and ashes and the shadow of death
Cast from the block beneath the axe that falls
On heads that saw me humbled ; I will do it,
Or bow mine own down to no royal end
And give my blood for theirs if God's will be,
But come back never as I now go forth
With but the hate of men to track my way
And not the face of any friend alive.

MARY BEATON

But I will never leave you till you die.

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